

Stay or go?  
Young people's agency and mobility in  
and out of small towns

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## Abstract

This doctoral thesis examines young people's place attachments in two small Victorian towns. This qualitative ethnographic study uses auto-driven photo-elicitation to understand young people's sense of place and futures in their home towns of Castlemaine and Maryborough. These case study towns are of a similar size, geography and heritage fabric. However, they are home to starkly different social indicators and economic policy contexts. The study seeks to understand how the cultural features of small towns affect young people's place attachment and also how place relationships might subsequently affect young people's sense of futures through their desired and intended locations and aspirations. To achieve this, the thesis explores young people's social constructions of place. The photo-elicitation method enables close attention to be paid to young people's engagement with their home towns. This thesis argues that agency or lack of agency is a significant factor in strengthening or diminishing young people's place attachments. Previous research suggests that one result of place attachment is that people will seek to remain being in a place. For young people in this study there appears to be an inverse relationship. Young people who had a broad and holistic sense of place engagement and attachment also had a broad sense of future possibilities and thus, intended to leave their home towns in pursuit of personal growth and education. Whereas young people who had a more limited sense of attachment or engagement had a narrower sense of future possibilities and were less likely to desire to leave their home town. The study contributes to knowledge about the ways in which place engagement can affect young people's social and physical mobility.



## Statement of authorship and originality

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement. Except where duly referred to, the thesis does not include material with copyright provisions or requiring copyright approvals.



Ember Parkin

20/12/2018



Dr Tim Harrison – Supervisor

## Statement of ethics approval

### Approval

Human Research Ethics Committee



Principal Researcher:	Keir Reeves
Other/Student Researcher/s:	Ember Parkin (PhD)
School/Section:	Faculty of Education and Arts
Project Number:	A16-016
Project Title:	Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns
For the period:	13/05/2016 to 24/12/2016

Quote the Project No: A16-016 in all correspondence regarding this application.

**Please note:** Ethics Approval is contingent upon the submission of annual Progress reports and a Final report upon completion of the project. It is the responsibility of researchers to make a note of the following dates and submit these reports in a timely manner, as reminders may not be sent out. Failure to submit reports will result in your ethics approval lapsing

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A final report for this project must be submitted to the Ethics Officer on:  
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These report forms can be found at:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keir Reeves".

Ethics Officer  
23 May 2016

Please see attached 'Conditions of Approval'.

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## Dedication

For my two little-Yarrows. I hope you grow to love and make lovable the place we have brought you into.

## List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order [UK]
CGSC	Central Goldfields Shire Council
DPCD	[Victorian] Department of Planning and Community Development
HSC	[Year 12] High School Certificate
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
HUL	Historic Urban Landscape
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage
LGA	Local Government Area
MASC	Mount Alexander Shire Council
PLIS	Plain Language Information Statement
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Index for Areas
TAFE	Training and Further Education
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overview of the study

This study seeks to examine the role that cultural features of place have to play in contributing to place attachment for young people from small country towns. This ethnographic study uses participant-driven photo-elicitation as the primary method of producing qualitative data to generate new knowledge. The research presents an exploratory, descriptive investigation of Castlemaine and Maryborough – two small, Victorian towns within a two hours' drive of the capital city of Melbourne. A principal driver for the study is the high level of socioeconomic disadvantage that appears to affect people living in regional towns, particularly in Victoria (Vinson, Rawsthorne, Beavis, & Ericson, 2015). A secondary driver for the study is a policy trend that has occurred, in which local governments in small towns have embraced aspects of Richard Florida's (2002) work as a means of encouraging in-migration of creative classes (see for instance, Mount Alexander Shire Council, 2013). This means of economic development often results in effectively transplanting a typically urban feel into a regional town. The creative migration approach to economic development has been strongly critiqued as researchers have identified that rather than holistically strengthening regions, the approach tends to contribute to social dislocation (Waitt & C. Gibson, 2009) and stratification (Edensor *et al.*, 2010) as well as privileging limited forms of creativity over others (C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005). Concurrently there is plenty of research to suggest that engagement with creativity, especially the arts and also heritage are significantly beneficial for community wellbeing, social and emotional wellbeing, and even educational engagement (see for instance, Anwar McHenry, 2009; Hawkes, 2001; Mills & Brown, 2004; Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, 2003; Pope & Doyle, 2006; Radbourne, Glow, & Johanson, 2010; Snowball, 2008; Stevenson, 2013; Vic Health, 2003). For this reason, I have selected Castlemaine – as a gentrified rural town that has

attracted creative migrants even since the 1980s, and continues to be promoted by local government and regional development associations as a location for creative migration today (Mount Alexander Shire Council, 2013). Castlemaine will be compared with Maryborough, a site of significant long term relative socioeconomic disadvantage that has an economic development policy based around retail and services industries and limited cultural programming and infrastructure.

While Maryborough and Castlemaine provide a strong juxtaposition in terms of social class, employment, migration and outward expressions of creativity, they also have a lot in common. Both towns are situated within the lands traditionally owned by the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal people. Both towns arose out of and flourished during the Victorian gold rush (1850s-1880s) and subsequently grew a manufacturing base which kept the towns alive after the gold had been depleted. They share a similar natural landscape and climate.

Castlemaine is closer to Melbourne than Maryborough is, but both are within a two-hour drive of the Victorian capital city of Melbourne.

In devising this study, initially my intent was to examine if and how the creative industries affected the connection of young people to their home town. I sought to know whether outward expressions of arts and creativity in a small town could actually help to mitigate the exodus of young people that is often keenly felt by small towns. Could arts and creativity strengthen attachment to place in young people, and therefore impact on place-related behaviours, especially the choice of young people to stay in, or return to, their home town? However, I worried that attempting to follow this hypothesis and to find a causal link between creativity and young people staying-in-place would put too much of a burden on the research. For a number of reasons I designed the research approach to be more open than my initial hypothesis-testing would have allowed. First, I wanted to avoid focusing too narrowly on creativity, thus limiting the scope of the research, and privileging high-art or creativity-as-industry. Because Castlemaine is represented in news media as thriving from



embracing the creative industries {Green, 2011 #264;Hore, 2016 #211;Hudson, 2014 #214;Hudson, 2015 #213;Pritchard, 2016 #268}, and Maryborough as lacking creativity and is represented as not thriving {Green, 2011 #207;Landy, 2015 #208;Webster, 2018 #843;Cluff, 2015 #209} I wanted to “disentangle [creativity] from economic instrumentality” (Edensor, Leslie, Millington, & Rantisi, 2010, p. 10) and instead refocus on broader cultural aspects of place. Hence, the study has a more open way of encapsulating both arts and creativity, as well as other expressions of culture, including vernacular creativity, expressions of everyday life and the ways that communities function culturally. As such, the principal research question is:

*In what ways do the cultural features of small towns affect young people’s place attachments?*

The secondary research question is:

*How does place attachment affect the ways that young people from small towns envision their locational choices?*

The thesis has been designed to contribute to knowledge through the targeted positioning in relation to existing research. The ways in which the thesis will do this are identified in brief here and explained further in the Literature Review in the following chapter. First, there is limited research that examines the qualitative nature of young people’s place attachment in non-urban areas (for exception see Eacott & Sonn, 2006). While a lot of research on place attachment comes from an environmental psychology perspective and focuses on psychological aspects of attachment, this thesis will contribute to a narrow body of research that focuses on the role of place in affecting place attachment (Lewicka, 2011; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Gabriel (2002, 2006) and C. Gibson (2008) have noted that while a significant body of research examines the effects of youth outmigration on rural areas, this type of research tends to focus on the impacts on the place, rather than addressing the social,

historical, cultural and economic factors of place that affect out-migration. The thesis will also go a little way to responding to Dana Prince's (2014) call to ascertain the role of place in affecting young people's future self-concepts (p. 712).

The following section of this introductory chapter now examines in detail the rationale and context for the study. This is followed by an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

## 1.2 Rationale for the study

A range of real world factors determine the rationale for this thesis. These will be explained here in the following order. First, a brief review of Australia's and Victoria's geographic spread of advantage and disadvantage identifies that regional small towns appear to be significantly disadvantaged in relation to rural and urban areas (Vinson, 2007, p. 97). Second, the ageing demographic of Victorian regional towns has potential impacts on the vibrancy and sustainability of a place, and thus the attractiveness of small towns to young people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 22; 2016b). Finally the growing cost of housing in Australian cities, and the subsequent drivers of regional migration and change have implications for small towns in various ways (C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Wilkins, 2016). Within this challenging socioeconomic context, young people from small towns must develop a future for themselves.

### 1.2.1 Australia's geographic spread of advantage and disadvantage

There exists, in Australia, a significant social and economic divide between metropolitan and regional and remote areas. Small country towns and rural areas have, in general, experienced significant decline over the last half-century. Agricultural and economic changes have been identified as the leading factors in contributing to an existing and growing socioeconomic divide between Australian regional towns and metropolitan areas. As

Graeme Davison (2005b) deftly notes in his introduction to *Struggle country: The rural ideal in the twentieth century*:

Our economic future now depends on tourism and educational experts more than it does on wool or wheat. The aggregation of rural holdings, mechanisation and improved strains of grain and stock mean that fewer people are needed to service the agricultural sector. (p. xi)

Compounding rural and regional disadvantage in many areas is the loss of essential services such as hospitals, schools, banks and post offices; as well as other facilities or institutions which make places more liveable such as sporting or social clubs, retail stores and cultural institutions (Cocklin & Dibden, 2005; B. Pritchard & McManus, 2000; Tonts, 2000).

In Australia the most comprehensive information regarding the measure of the geographical spread of social and economic disadvantage and advantage is found in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publication *Social and Economic Index for Areas* (SEIFA). The SEIFA uses Australian Census data to measure relative social and economic disadvantage through a range of indicators including variables associated with income, education, employment, occupation and housing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011c). The ABS also uses other indicators relating to individuals, families or dwellings, such as the number of single parent households, the number of people living in a dwelling, or the number of people needing assistance in daily activities. The ABS (2011c) “broadly defines relative socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage in terms of people’s access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society” (p. 6).

The geographical spread of relative advantage and disadvantage is illustrated by the figure below, a map of central Victoria indicating the ABS SEIFA’s *Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage* (IRSAD). The map demonstrates that many country towns,

even when bounded by relatively advantaged rural areas, are home to high levels of relative disadvantage, the towns appearing as little red hotspots of in the figure below.

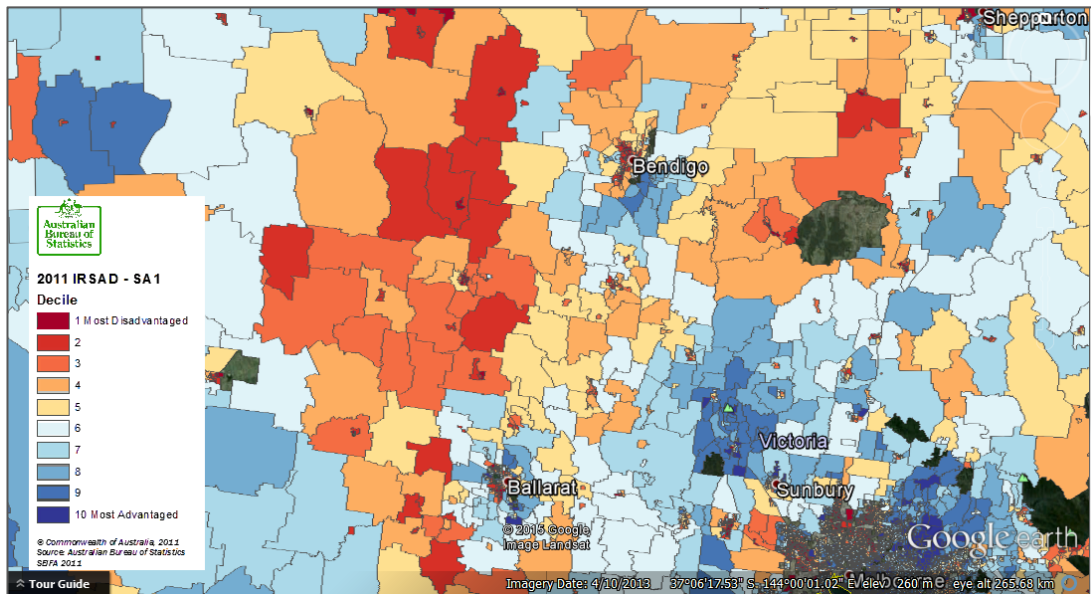


Figure 1 Central Victoria SEIFA IRSAD

Source: Google Earth and 2011 Census (ABS SEIFA – SA1, 2013)

Tony Vinson’s (2017) study of the distribution of disadvantage across Australia further demonstrates the rural/urban divide between advantage and disadvantage. Vinson’s study notes that throughout the nation over half of the most disadvantaged areas are rural localities, and about a quarter each in rural urban centres (or country towns) and metropolitan areas (p. 97). In Victoria though, the situation actually appears to be significantly worse for country towns as illustrated in the chart below. In 2007, 40% of Victoria’s disadvantaged localities were country towns and 32% were rural Victorian areas (p. 97).

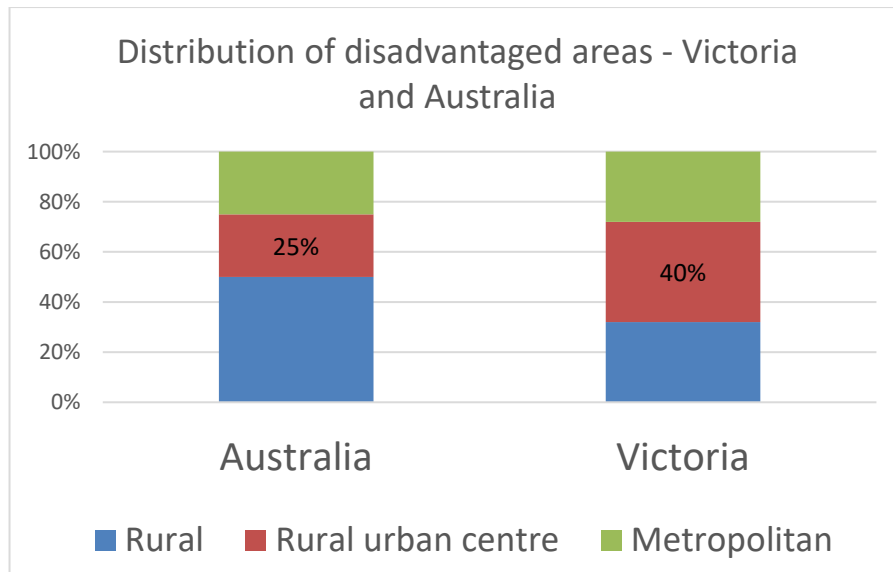


Figure 2 Regional distribution of disadvantaged areas

Source: Adapted from Vinson (2007).

In considering the broader implications of growing divisions between advantaged and disadvantaged communities, Baum *et al.* (2005a), note that there is a general argument for a society to address socioeconomic disadvantage because it impacts negatively on the broader social, economic and environmental efficiency of a region, state or country. Furthermore, gaps “between places which are advantaged, and places which are disadvantaged, matter because they generally result in more negative outcomes for the disadvantaged places and the people that live there” (Baum, O'Connor, *et al.*, 2005a, p. 1.8).

Small towns experiencing disadvantage due to agricultural decline are often home to lower-than-average wages, larger proportions of low-income households, fewer-than-average “educated professional” occupations, higher-than-average rates of unemployment and youth unemployment, low rates of labour force participation and high rates of vulnerable jobs, along with high number of single parent and no working parent households, high volume of rent assistance and government pensions (Baum, O'Connor, & Stimson, 2005b, p. 05.10). Some areas have been able to adapt quite well to this change through attracting lifestyle migrants or developing a sector in cultural or environmental tourism (Baum, O'Connor, *et al.*, 2005b;

Davison, 2005a; Tonts, 2000). For instance, Davison (2005a) writes, some “picturesque towns in the old mining regions or along the coast close to capital cities have been rejuvenated by an influx of city dwellers seeking refuge from the urban rat-race” (p. 5). However, the fact remains that there are generally higher levels of disadvantage in rural areas and regional towns than in metropolitan localities generally. And whilst some towns have been revived by sea-changers and tree-changers, this also “accelerates the demise of a distinctive pattern of country life” (Davison, 2005a, p. 5).

The problem of rural and regional disadvantage across Victoria is unlikely to be solved by an easy fix. Each area will have its own needs and challenges which have evolved out of its specific historical, cultural, environmental, economic and political concerns. However, this thesis investigates the capacity for culture to be embraced as an agent of development to address a specific challenge that many of these towns share – the active engagement of young people.

### 1.2.2 Ageing profile of Australia’s regional towns

Australia has an increasingly ageing population in general. The trend of out-migration of young people from regional and rural areas in search of education, employment, or other experiences has led to even higher-than-average median ages in these places (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 22; 2016b). Since the early twentieth century, there has been public concern over the loss of youth in regional and rural areas to capital and provincial cities (Davison, 2005a, p. 3). This concern was initially a moral one – as country life was seen as virtuous and healthy as opposed to life in the city that could be morally depraved and generally unhealthy (Davison, 2005a, p. 5). However, more recently, the concern is not for the fates of those young people who leave country areas, but for the regions themselves. For instance, demographer Bernard Salt (2003) notes this “structural social shift has an impact on the economic wellbeing of a community and also on the sense of vitality within that community” (p. 68). Hence, the outmigration of young people from a regional town or

rural area can also negatively affect the relative socioeconomic advantage of that place. The problem is also one that compounds itself, as more young people leave an area, there remains less people, activities and infrastructure to engage, attract and retain young people. Research on the outmigration of young people from rural and regional areas is further explored in the Literature Review, presented in the following chapter.

### 1.2.3 Housing inaffordability and regional migration

The cost of housing in both the rental and buyers' market is exceedingly high in Australian metropolitan areas. This has been demonstrated to significantly affect young people's ability to amass wealth (Wilkins, 2016). The *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey* for 2016 illustrates that between 2002 and 2014, median household wealth has increased significantly for every age group over 35, but for 25-34 year olds it has flat-lined – showing an increase of just \$4,000 over the twelve years (Wilkins, 2016). This indicates low rates of home ownership and little increase in average wages for people in this age group. There are two significant implications of this environment. First, it means that more first home owners are looking to relocate to smaller regional towns where housing is more affordable. This, in turn, places pressures on the existing local housing market and could have the effect of making housing less affordable, particularly for locals who are relatively more disadvantaged. Second, with pressures of rental costs in Australian capital cities, it is becoming increasingly difficult for regional young people to relocate to urban centres in order to study or find employment without the help of their families. So as options become limited, it is important to develop an understanding of the dynamics of place which could contribute to young people feeling positive about remaining in their small regional town, rather than a feeling of limited opportunity.

*The new creative economy and its implications in regional planning*

Global political and economic change that has occurred in the digital age has had a significant impact on our economy and the way we work. This change, according to Reich (1992), is directly related to globalization, the ability to operate economically without concern for national borders and within an emerging information economy – in which thought-based work is privileged over production or service-based labour (p. 8). This economic and political change has resulted in a body of research examining how places can harness creativity as a means to innovate and succeed within the new knowledge economy (see for example, Bille & Schulze, 2006; Florida, 2002, 2005; Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Throsby, 2008). Florida (2002) charts the success of the new so-called creative class of workers and examines how the success of a metropolitan region can hinge on how well it can attract them. An extended review of creative city led planning and critiques of it is found in the Literature Review – but is highlighted here as a driver of the rationale for this thesis. Whilst Florida’s theories around creative migration have been widely critiqued, his work was instrumental in bringing notions of both creativity and a sense of place to the fore as a valuable means of contributing to regional growth and economic vitality (UNDP UNESCO, 2013). In response to this, in Australia over the last decade, many regional plans and strategies have begun to focus on how regions can build the right sense of place in order to attract new, creative migrants with the hope of fostering innovation and economic growth. As an example of the popularity of Florida’s proposition, an internet search with the terms “Richard Florida” and “Strategy” and “.gov.au” returns a long list of state and local government plans and strategies that cite Florida as a key reference.

In response to a general trend of stilted or declining population and economies in Australian small towns and cities, regional development strategies have adopted principles that Florida sets forward in attempts to attract creative migrants and, in turn, foster innovation and economic development (National Economics, 2002). However, as demonstrated in detail in



the Literature Review of this thesis, the approach has been criticized for a wide range of reasons including for exacerbating social dislocation and compounding disadvantage (see for instance, Florida, 2013; C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005).

This regional development context was a key driver in selecting the case study towns for this thesis. In Castlemaine, Florida (2002) is cited in the local government's *Economic Development Strategy* (Mount Alexander Shire Council, 2013, p. 70) and the regional town is far along the creative migration and gentrification trail. Maryborough, on the other hand is not, with the local government *Workforce Development Strategy* there focusing on (often low income and low value) retail and services sectors (Central Goldfields Shire Council, 2013).

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, the Literature Review presents a targeted survey of research that informs the study. This includes both looking for gaps in research, that this thesis might address, as well as literature that helps to build the rationale for devising the methodological course of the research. This involves an examination of existing research in the fields of place attachment, children and young people's geographies, regional restructuring and creative place-making, as well as an engagement on literature around understanding culture in the context of place.

The theory, methodology and research methods used to answer the research questions are then presented in Chapter 3. The theoretical basis of this thesis adapts the "spatializing culture" framework presented by Setha Low (2016), in which the lenses of the social production of space, and the social construction of space are employed to analyse the ways that cultures and spaces affect one another. The methodology chapter then presents the critical ethnographic method as a suitable approach to answer the research questions. Auto-driven photo-elicitation is adopted as the principal research method through which to

understand the lived experience of young people, and the ways in which they socially construct the space around them, both actively and passively.

A range of characteristics of Castlemaine and Maryborough are explored in Chapter 4 to help build an understanding of the ways in which each place is produced economically, historically, politically and socially. This is described as the *bol de contexte*, which is the place, the permeable container of context in which young people experience their lives. The brief Chapter 5 introduces the photo-elicitation research participants. I discuss how while the recruitment strategy was the same in both places, it played out very differently in each town. It is likely that this affected the types of people who ended up participating in either town. Thus, the study is focused on the qualitative nature of individual experience of place rather than being from a representative sample of young people. To give full credence to the photographic and interview data, I then introduce all the participants, condensing information from their interview transcripts to provide an insight into some key factors about these individuals. An understanding of these individuals is helpful when reading the photo-elicitation findings about them and is a vital part of the ethnographic method.

Chapter 6 maps out the cultural features or characteristics of place that are valued by young people in each town, as illustrated through their photographs and interviews. This chapter provides a fairly descriptive presentation of the qualitative photo-elicitation data, establishing the grounding against which to explore specific themes more theoretically in the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 7 provides an account of young people's experiences and perceptions of spatial boredom in their home towns and the ways in which this negatively affects young people's place attachment to their home towns. Notions of scale are of interest here as in some cases the smallness of the town is seen as a significant detractor, while in other instances, the town is seen as too large to be traversed on foot, and this also contributes to boredom. The

theme of boredom is expanded upon in Chapter 8, which examines young people's experiences of surveillance in their home towns and the tactics that they employ to avoid it. The research here identifies that strong social capital and high levels of community surveillance can be experienced by young people as spatially limiting, thus diminishing young people's sense of spatial agency creating a more inward, limited sense of engagement with place.

Mobility arose as a significant theme in the photo-elicitation work, especially in Castlemaine and this is discussed in Chapter 9. Here I examine notions the physical infrastructure of the train enabling Castlemaine to be socially constructed as fluid and networked. The concept of mobility as capital is also examined. This leads into the Chapter 10 which looks at young people's experiences and perceptions of a dualistic dichotomy that exists in Castlemaine and is discursively constructed along classed lines.

The final chapter then examines the role of place attachment on the way in which young people envision their future locations. This chapter works to explore if and how place attachment has a role in determining whether young people choose to stay at home, leave and return or leave with no intention to return. Finally the research is summarised and opportunities for further research are identified in the conclusion.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review has been developed through a targeted survey of research that informs the study examining the role of place in affecting young people's place attachment and envisioned futures in small towns. This involves both identifying gaps in research that this thesis might address, as well as literature that helps to build the rationale for devising the course of the research. In the initial instance a review of place attachment research is provided. Though most commonly conducted in the field of environmental psychology, place attachment research is also carried out in a range of fields as diverse as geography, planning, heritage, community development, sociology, and ethnography. After examining place attachment research generally, the Literature Review then focuses in on the narrower body of research that looks at young people and place attachment, especially in rural or regional areas. This review also highlights some gaps in the research that this thesis will address – especially through contributing to the narrow body of research examining regional young people and place attachment, as well as examining the features of a place that enhance or diminish place attachment (rather than the existing emphasis on the affective, emotional, and other psychological processes involved in place attachment).

Following a discussion of place attachment research, the Literature Review follows with a discussion of regional young people, disadvantage and mobility which leads into the field of children and young people's geographies. This field is vital for understanding young people's engagement with place – including how young people are constructed as "others" (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a) and are often spatially marginalised (Sibley, 1995). The rural turn in children and young people's geographies is attended to (Philo, 1992), where in some cases this focus is able to destabilise the dichotomy between urban and rural (Nairn, Panelli, &

McCormak, 2003), in other cases there are examinations of very particular challenges for rural young people such as belonging and identity (Leysdon, 2008, 2011).

The Literature Review then examines research surrounding the restructuring of regional economies and place-making approaches, including creative-city led planning and place making as articulated in the work of Landry, (2006), Landry and Bianchini (1995) as well as Florida (2002, 2005). Whilst this work generally centres on urban contexts, the core premise of Florida's work (2002, 2005) – that migration of creative classes into low socioeconomic areas helps to provide a socioeconomic boon to those areas – has been frequently embraced and adopted in a regional planning context. A wide range of critiques of this approach are then surveyed, which helps to illustrate where the approach embraced in a rural context may lead to further entrenching socioeconomic disadvantage or social dislocation between groups. This survey of critiques of creative city led regional planning also identifies gaps in existing research that this thesis will address.

The Literature Review then discusses research assessing the social, economic and community benefits of participation and engagement with culture through creative expressions and projects. The research on critiquing creative place-making as well as research on cultural community development both indicate that communities could benefit from broadening the definition of "culture" as linked to visual and performing arts, so as to be more holistic allowing for a broader range of cultural expressions and practices.

## 2.2 Place attachment research

Place attachment is defined simply as "the bonding of people to places" (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 2). This implies an emotional or cultural connection to a physical space, which is made meaningful through physical and social and cultural engagements (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 5). This bonding can often occur subconsciously and develop progressively from ongoing "behavioural, affective and cognitive ties between individuals and/or groups and

their socio-physical environment” (Brown & Perkins, 1992, p. 284). Place attachment can occur on an individual level as well as at a collective level through communities of use. It is usually taken to be a bond between people and places that is experienced positively, thus contributing to a sense of loss or grief when a place is changed or no longer accessible to a person. A strong thread of research in the field of place attachment examines environmentally protective behaviours (Devine-Wright, 2009). While place attachment generally implies an emotional bond with a physical place, it can also be interpreted as an emotional bond with the community in a particular area (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003). Some researchers (for instance, Eacott & Sonn, 2006; Pretty, Bramston, Patrick, & Pannach, 2006; Pretty *et al.*, 2003; Theodori & Theodori, 2015) assess place attachment, sense of community, and sense of place as different concepts, while others bring all of these notions under the broad umbrella of place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992). I am inclined to adopt the latter approach as I see that a community and sense of place (also referred to as place identity) are a key part of creating a place as a “meaningful location”, the object of attachment (Lewicka, 2011, p. 213). Scannell and Gifford (2010) claim that place attachment research has become an important topic because “person-place bonds have become fragile” (p. 1) through processes of globalisation, increased mobility and environmental change. However, the concern for this fragility of person-place bonds – especially in the developed Western world, in places where people have not been displaced through conflict, famine, or environmental disasters – has been pointed out to be perhaps a little overblown. For instance, as Easthope (2009) notes, as long as people are based physically in the world, then their relations with place are relevant to their lives. Stemming from a conventional concern in place attachment research that sees attachment to place as positive and mobility as negative, Gustafson (2014) argues that rather, place is still relevant and important even to people whose lives are defined by (voluntary) mobility (p. 38). Consequently, Gustafson (2014) conceptualises different forms of place attachment as “place as routes” and “place as

roots” – thereby broadening the definition of place to include “expressions of individual trajectory and identity... and personal choice rather than roots and continuity” (p. 39).<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2.1 The value of place attachment

Research has demonstrated that place attachment has a range of correlated benefits including: improved individual wellbeing (Lewicka, 2011;Theodori, 2015 #254); enhanced bonding social capital, trust and life satisfaction (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014; Pretty *et al.*, 2003, p. 275); active and engaged citizenry / behaviours – for instance, participation in community organisations (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014); or pro-environmental behaviours (Devine-Wright, 2009); as well as children’s wellbeing (Jack, 2010). With place being such a prolific and omnipresent concept, research into place attachment has arisen in a wide variety of fields. These include, but are not limited to, human geography, sociology, environmental psychology, urban studies, planning and tourism (for an extensive review, see Lewicka, 2011). This wide range of disciplines and associated theoretical contexts has contributed to a multitude of definitions, concepts and methods within place attachment research (Lewicka, 2011; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). This lack of definition is compounded by the wide range of factors (including practical, emotional, aesthetic, personal, social, and environmental factors) that can lead to the decision to move to a place, to stay in it, or to move away from it. Furthermore, the lack of clarity is intensified by the somewhat intangible nature of many of the concepts that place attachment research deals with. The notion of a sense of place, for instance, is ultimately fuelled by a feeling of ambience and is a highly subjective, fluid and vague concept.

Scannell and Gifford (2010) present a tri-partite model of place attachment that contributes to understanding the different dimensions of place attachment and setting up a cohesive

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<sup>1</sup> Gustafson notes that these categorisations are archetypal and individuals may incorporate both roots and routes into their place attachments.

methodological framework. Place attachment has been associated some basic functions of place attachment such as providing a sense of security, supporting the fulfilment of personal goals, self-continuity and contributing to sense of belonging or enhancing identity (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). In this manner, place attachment provides a vital framework for examining ways in which place can be positively harnessed to engaged young people in regional towns which, as I have shown, are often home to significant levels of relative socioeconomic disadvantage.

Lewicka's (2011) extensive review of place attachment literature provides some coherency around the wide-ranging definitions and methods in place attachment research, including understanding what the consequences of place attachment are. There has been somewhat of a divide in place attachment research between "classic" definitions of place – as places with "...unique identity and historical continuity", and a place as a "source of potential social interactions" (Lewicka, 2011, pp. 209-210). Contemporary conceptualisations of place as fluid, changing and dependent upon the people in it, is at ease with contemporary places in a globalized world (Lewicka, 2011, p. 209-210). The social (and cultural) element(s) of place are vital to place attachment research. Place "defined as a 'meaningful location', is an entity that has a social dimension, but also a palpable and very physical basis" (Lewicka, 2011, p. 213). In other words, place attachment research can benefit from looking at the layering of meaning from both a social and a physical perspective. Lewicka (2011) and Scannell and Gifford (2010) identify that much research on place attachment neglects to engage with the actual place – what are the physical and social features of the place that encourage positive attachment? Instead, the bulk of place attachment research examines the personal dimension of place attachment – examining the role of individual and collective experience in fostering attachment (Lewicka, 2011, p. 222). By looking at the cultural features of two small towns that contribute to place attachment in young people, this thesis will contribute to knowledge in this area of limited understanding.



In *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods, and Applications* Manzo and Devine-Wright (2014) bring together research from a range of disciplines, cohering a comprehensive account of contemporary theory, methods and applications in place attachment research (also discussed in significantly more detail in the methodology chapter of this thesis). The book illustrates the truly interdisciplinary nature of place attachment research with chapters stemming from theoretical disciplines as diverse as phenomenology (Seamon, 2014), discursive analysis (Di Masso *et al.*, 2014), social capital (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014), and memory (Lewicka, 2014). In presenting such a wide range of approaches and conceptualisations around place attachment, Manzo and Devine-Wright acknowledge that the field fits quite comfortably alongside social sciences that have been influenced by post structuralism and postmodernism (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014, p. 5). Place attachment research embraces “multidimensionality, and [takes] a pluralistic perspective on people-place relationships” (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014, p. 5). In this sense, subjective experience and the role of aspects of identity such as race, gender, class and ability must be considered when examining place attachment. There is not a singular, universal experience of any place.

### 2.2.2 Young people and place attachment

The majority of place attachment research focuses on adults’ attachment to place. Very few researchers have attempted to address the dearth of research examining factors contributing to place attachment in young people. In Australia, the small body of research on this topic focuses on aspects of place attachment that might affect the out-migration decisions of young rural people. Easthope’s (2009) study of Tasmanian young people who have out-migrated and then returned identifies that young people invest subjectively in both their mobility as in “place as routes” (Gustafson, 2014) as well as through their attachment to home-place. Easthope also claims that place identification is not always positive – but

rather, that people can identify against place, in opposition to it. In another study, Eacott and Sonn (2006) use a place attachment framework to assess the social and cultural factors that contributed to lack of place attachment in young people who had moved away from a country town or rural area. The study suggests individual needs (the needs for young people to establish identities and engage in new and diverse experiences) and social needs (the needs for young people to either access a wider social pool, or to avoid an “unreceptive social environment”) were the most significant contributing factors in the decision to leave (p. 201). In another study of place attachment in regional adolescents, Pretty *et al.*, (2003) suggest that the quality of resources in the community which enable adolescents to fulfil their social and personal goals were determining factors in whether adolescents felt attached to their home town or not. There is an apparent gender divide in rural young people’s community satisfaction – with young women indicating “their frustration with the diminishing number of sites for diversity in recreation and entertainment” (Pretty *et al.*, 2003, p. 283). Whilst Pretty *et al.* (2003) have not explicitly examined the role of cultural features of place in place attachment, themes such as diversity of experience and establishment of identity provide indications that the cultural features of place play a significant role in contributing to young people’s satisfaction with place. Another quantitative study by Pretty *et al.* (2006) examines the role of community attachment and sense of belonging on the out-migration of rural young people. The study finds that a sense of belonging can act as a pull-factor in leading young people to stay in a rural place (Pretty *et al.*, 2006).

Theodori and Theodori (2015) also use a community attachment framework to examine the migration intentions of young people from rural areas in Texas, USA. Community attachment is defined as “the emotional and psychological connections and commitments individuals have to the community in which they live” (Theodori & Theodori, 2015, p. 385). This research identifies that strong community attachment correlated positively with the intention or

desire to stay in the home community (Theodori & Theodori, 2015, p. 387). However, the study also revealed that aspiration for higher education is correlated with the intention or desire to leave the rural place of origin. Whereas those young people who intended to undertake trades or vocational education were more likely to express a desire to stay in their home community (Theodori & Theodori, 2015, p. 387).

The studies mentioned above use a place attachment framework to assess the factors involved in determining whether young people decide to leave or stay in their regional hometowns. However, there is also a range of associated literature that examines the reasons and impacts of out-migration of young people from rural and regional areas. For instance, a study by Gabriel (2002) also identifies that the out migration of young people from regional Tasmania is often accompanied by a narrative of a brain drain or losing the “best and brightest” (2002). Gabriel’s discursive analysis of newspaper articles lamenting the loss of young people to the city from Tasmanian regional areas identifies that discourse focused on two themes: what older Tasmanians want for younger ones; or what the impact of youth out-migration is on the community (Gabriel, 2002). Within this discourse there is considerable lack of focus on youth and young people’s perspectives – and that the discourse is often nostalgic and paternalistic (Gabriel, 2002). In this sense, media outlets and community groups are neglecting to focus on what social and economic conditions might be addressed in the community to curb the trend, or, indeed, whether out-migration might be a positive and vital aspect of young people’s development (Gabriel, 2002, p. 210).

This trend in media discourse identified by Gabriel is also reflected in academic research on the topic. For instance, Argent and Walmsley (2008) cite a range of problems associated with the outmigration of young people from rural areas, including the outmigration of high achievers, resulting in loss of future community leaders, erosion of social capital, the higher rates of young women leaving, leading to a gender imbalance in the community and a subsequent reduction in births (pp. 142-143). Salt (2003) also suggests that out-migration of

young people from rural and regional areas leads to a loss of economic viability and vibrancy of regional communities (p. 66-68). Alston (2004) examines the issues with rural and small town living that contribute to out-migration for young people, primarily focusing on structural factors like education and employment opportunities, but also other features like social capital. Young people who stay in a regional town and cannot find work are at risk of social exclusion and experience barriers to entry into employment and other social groups (Alston, 2004, p. 308).

Young people's out-migration from rural and regional areas is ambivalent. While there are identified benefits to place attachment, there are also benefits associated with physical mobility. For instance, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) and Marzi (2017) both examine the connection between physical mobility and social mobility. Not only through physical mobility can rural young people access a broader range of education opportunities but also perhaps a less "sticky" (Allen & Hollingworth, 2013) sense of self which contributes to a broader, more expansive sense of possibility for the future. When trying to understand the migration choices of young people from regional and rural areas, it is important to note that there is often an accepted narrative that a young person will leave a rural area, or that if they stay, there's not much hope for them. Some researchers have explored this notion – which Farrugia (2016) refers to as a "mobility imperative" for rural and regional youth (see also, Alston, 2004; Budge & Martin, 2011; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008).

While substantial research looks at the effects of the out-migration of young people on the country towns themselves, there is limited research that focuses on the factors of the town or region itself that might contribute to the trend of young people leaving (for exception, see Giddings & Yarwood, 2007). Argent and Walmsley (2008) argue for the need to research migration patterns of young, rural people with a view to examining the particular regional contexts – that is, the cultural, economic, political, structural and geophysical factors of a place that might play a role in young people's decisions to stay or leave (pp. 151). Likewise,

C. Gibson and Argent (2008) note that research on rural youth migration needs to be responsive to young people's own self-identification and how they perceive the relationship between their own identities and place. They argue there is a need for research that examines rural and regional youth migration in light of the specific nature of place – to answer questions such as:

- How do the social, historical, economic dynamics of a place impact the desire of young people to stay or leave?
- Can and in what ways can rural communities manage the desire of young people to stay or leave? (C. Gibson, 2008, p. 138).

So while Gabriel (2002, 2006), Easthope and Gabriel (2008), C. Gibson (2008), and C. Gibson and Argent (2008) do not use a place attachment framework for their research, they each identify a similar gap in research as is identified by place attachment researchers – that is, there is little research that examines the particular aspects of *place* that affect a young person's choice to stay in or leave a rural locality. This thesis will directly contribute to new knowledge in this cross-disciplinary field of understanding, contributing to the small body of research that examines place attachment in young people with particular regard to the specific dynamics of place that may or may not lead to attachment.

### 2.3 Children and young people's geographies

As a study examining the ways in which cultural features of place affect young people's sense of place attachment and envisioned futures, this research benefits greatly from an engagement with literature in the field of children and young people's geographies.

Research emerging from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' (BCCCS) in the 1970s young people in Britain (for instance, Corrigan, 1979; S. Hall & Jefferson, 1975; McRobbie, 1978) is a fairly central grounding point for many children and young people's geographies. For instance, in *Resistance through Rituals*, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson

(1975) compiled a range of research on the ways in which British young people resist power structures through subcultural rituals and the territorialisation of public space. Within this, Corrigan (1975) examines the *street* as a space in which disadvantaged young people (predominantly young men) can claim agency and socially construct identities. McRobbie's (1978) work is central for addressing a gender imbalance in the work of the BCCCS. For instance, her 1978 *Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity* explores the ways in which British working class girls' femininity is socially produced and reproduced through social and familial interactions and interactions with social institutions. One of the main connections between this early British cultural studies research and more recent work in children and young people's geographies is the central focus on the ways in which young people often occupy a liminal position in Western societies.

Holloway and Valentine (2000a) articulate clearly the ways in which the term *childhood* has been used as both a biological category, and a means of designating innocence or the need of protection and care (p. 2). However, the ways in which children have been categorised has resulted in children and young people having a "less-than-adult status"; meaning they become "adult's 'other'", being seen as "human becomings rather than human beings" (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a, pp. 2-5). In light of this, researchers have also started to critique the focus on the transitions of young people (as in, child to adolescent, adolescent to adult, school-leavers, marriage, see for instance, Panelli, Punch, & Robson, 2007a; Skelton, 2002). Focusing too narrowly on these transitions is seen to minimise the relevance and importance of the actual contemporary experience of young people as the notion of transition positions them as in a process of becoming an (whole) adult. As such, the term "young people" (or young person) has been adopted by many children and young people's geographers, as opposed to using categories of childhood or adolescence. Choosing to use the term young people aims to "acknowledge the integrity of the person / people's lives and

experiences in their own right, even while registering that they belong to a particular ‘young’ age group” (Panelli *et al.*, 2007a, p. 3).

Sibley (1995) uses the lens of difference to investigate the various ways in which people can be geographically excluded or marginalised. He argues that who “is felt to belong and not to belong contributes in an important way to the shaping of social space” (Sibley, 1995, p. 3). It is anticipated that a study of young people’s sense of place attachment in small towns will evoke stories of both spatial inclusion and exclusion. In investigating how geographies of exclusion exist specifically around young people, Sibley (1995) argues that adolescents inhabit a boundary zone between child and adult, which further contributes to their spatial marginalisation through various ways in which space is monitored and controlled (p. 3).

Where young people’s spaces are becoming increasingly restricted, Aitken (2001) sees this as potentially limiting young people’s capacity to engage actively and creatively in public space. “Transitional spaces of unmitigated potential, creativity and imagination”, he argues, “are diminishing because they are threatening to adult control and comfort” (Aitken, 2001, p. 177). Hence, the adult regulation of public space may impact not just the physical freedom of young people but also their capacity to engage with place imaginatively and creatively.

Where children and young people’s geographies frequently aim to address the “othering” and spatial marginalisation of young people (for instance, Brown, 2013; O. Jones, 1997), the concept of liminality offers a useful frame for exploring young people’s various forms of spatial engagements. As Wood (2016) writes:

Viewing the potential for *agency within liminality* offers a chance to advance the rather intractable debates about structure versus agency that lurch from one side to the other.... Liminality focuses attention not on either structure or agency but the

fuzzy state of ambiguity that might sit in between these positions. (pp. 491-492 – emphasis added)

Hence, in my study I hope to identify young people’s “spaces of unmitigated potential” (Aitken, 2001), along with spaces of exclusion, as well as to identify areas of “agency within [spatial] liminality” (Wood, 2016). The focus on young people’s agency is really important, for while we acknowledge that young people are likely to experience spatial (and other forms of) marginalisation, researchers have also acknowledged the importance of seeing young people as active agents rather than passive subjects. As Prout and James (1998) argue:

Children were [previously] seen to be simply constrained by the environments within which they found themselves. What the emergent paradigm within the ethnography of childhood has begun to do is to ... [allow] us to see children as possessed of individual agency, as competent social actors, and interpreters of the world. (p. 90)

Hence, in putting forward an agenda for the “new social studies of childhood” Holloway and Valentine (2000a) claim that the conceptualisation of the child is not just bound within adult-child relations. Rather, social studies of young people must include other factors of difference including class, race, gender, time and place which are mutually and concurrently constitutive in young people’s social relations (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a, p. 7).

A common theme within children and young people’s geographies research is the various ways in which young people access, use and strengthen their agency – particularly in public space. Hence a focus on young people’s use of “tactics” (to borrow from de Certeau, 1984) has become prevalent in children and young people’s geographies. “Tactics” are defined as “calculated action[s] determined by the absence of a proper locus [of power]” and the “space of the tactic is the space of the *other*” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37 emphasis added).



Many researchers use examples of young people's use of the street and public space as a site for investigating the use of such tactics in the face of spatial marginalisation (for instance, Hill & Bessant, 1999; Horton, Christensen, Kraftl, & Hadfield-Hill, 2014; Joelsson, 2015a; Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 2000; Panelli, Nairn, & McCormak, 2002; Skelton, 2000). Corrigan's (1979) work in the 1970s finds that the street is the space where young people have most control over what they do – more so than at home or any in other commercial public space where they are subject to more surveillance and control. A subsequent thread of research has revealed that children and young people experience significantly less privacy than adults as their homes and their institutions such as school are heavily regulated spaces in which certain rules must be adhered to and in which spaces are coded for specific uses (Valentine, 2004; Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). In examining young people's use of the street as a hang-out space in outer urban UK housing estates, Matthews, Limb and Taylor (2000) argue "the 'street' represents a border zone, a place where young people may develop their own identities, but rarely overturn the hegemony (adults)" (p. 65). The street then, provides a space in which young people's tactics or agency within liminality can be explored.

Valentine's (2004) investigation of parental spatial regulation of children examines how the emotional driver of fear contributes to how and why parents spatially regulate their children in both urban and rural contexts. While research indicates that teenagers hanging around in public space are often perceived as threatening and intimidating, Valentine (2004) also argues that teenagers in public space do not set out to be threatening or intimidating. It is more often the case that "posturing and larking around sometimes leads to laws being broken or to children disrupting adults' worlds..." (p. 87). Through examining young people's geographies of play (Pyyry & Tani, 2016; Skelton, 2009; Valentine, 2004; Witten & Carroll, 2016), drinking spaces (Valentine, Holloway, Knell, & Jayne, 2008), or hanging out (Joelsson, 2015a; Skelton, 2000; Weller, 2004) and their independent spatial mobility (Giddings &

Yarwood, 2007; Horton *et al.*, 2014; Leyshon, 2011; Skelton, 2013), children and young people's geographers have been able to explore young people's "agency within liminality" (Wood, 2016, pp. 491-492).

A range of studies have examined the dynamic between young people's tactical use of public space and their identity development (for example, see T. Hall, Coffey, & Williamson, 1999). For instance, where Skelton (2000) examines teenage girls' use of the street and other public spaces in a regional mining town in Wales she discovers that spatial engagement is a vital part of these young people's lives:

The girls' social and leisure geographies were active, significant, and clearly positive and central features of their lives. The ways in which the girls could maintain their active geographical presence was through their friendships and the close networks they built up between themselves. (p. 96)

The capacity to actively take up space whilst engaging socially comes to be seen as a key point in young people's ongoing processes of identity development.

Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2002) argue that young people seek private spaces for "social interaction and personal renewal", hence place plays a significant role in identity development (p. 500). Likewise, Hall, Coffey and Williamson (1999) argue that "emergent identities require a space of their own" (p. 505). To give a pragmatic credence to the argument of the centrality of place to identity development, Hall *et al.* (1999) refer to the commonality of asking a newly introduced person where they are from – illustrating the importance of *placing* someone; contextualising a person based on their place of origin or residence (p. 509). Leyshon and Bull's (2011) study of young people's place-based identity in the countryside brings forward the notion of memory as a vital and active aspect of the "assemblage of space, place and identity" (p. 161).

While a considerable amount of children and young people's geography research has focused on urban contexts, there is a growing body of research that has responded to Chris Philo's (1992) "Neglected Rural Geographies". In reviewing Colin Ward's (1988) exploration of the rural child in English literature, Philo provides a call to social and cultural geographers to pay attention to rural young people's lives, as an "other" group that experiences various forms of marginalisation. A number of geographers have responded. In Jones (1997) and Valentine (1997) we see the evocation of a discursive dualism between the urban and the rural – where the countryside is perceived and constructed as safe, natural, wholesome while the city is perceived as potentially dangerous and unnatural but then also perhaps attractive to youth cultures. Nairn *et al.* (2003) examine young people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion in rural and urban New Zealand, and discover that while often the countryside is discursively constructed as inclusive, and the city as exclusive, young people experience both types of places as *both* inclusive *and* exclusive concurrently. Collins and Kearns (2001) also discuss the rural / urban dualism – from the perspective of spatial control and regulation through the introduction of police curfews for young people in two rural NZ towns. Their study identifies that the curfew was directed at the phenomenon of young urban people encroaching on the peaceful rural space, bringing with them negative "urban" youthful behaviour such as drug use, violence and vandalism (Collins & Kearns, 2001).

Through examining young people's use of space in villages and rural areas in Britain, Matthews *et al.*, (2000) begin to debunk preconceptions about rural life offering free and unhindered access to nature for young people. The range of exploration for the young people in Matthews' *et al.* (2000) study was not significantly greater than those of urban children. With rural villages being surrounded by fenced and bounded, private farmland, young people appeared to be more spatially constricted than urban young people (Matthews *et al.*, 2000). Leyshon (2008) examines the ways in which rural young people actively produce their identities, cultures and spaces in the context of their rurality. Young

rural people work to both “counter and reinforce traditional notions of rural marginalisation” (Leyshon, 2008, p. 1). Leyshon (2008) argues that concurrent process of inclusion and exclusion occur in rural communities that result in young people’s relationships to their rural home places are “characterised by conflicting feelings of belonging, longing, ambivalence and abhorrence” (p. 2).

Some children and young people’s geography work has begun to examine the connection between place engagement and aspiration or future self-concept. For instance Cairns (2014) explores a tension in rural young women’s visioning of their futures, revealing an emergent tension between projections of urban femininity and maintaining locational attachment to place. Prince’s (2014) work reveals a connection between young people’s place based relationships and identities and their aspirations and visions of the future. Prince’s review suggests that place relationships can be implicated in a young person developing an “expansive” or “blunted” future self-concept (2014). In part, this is related to how a place might be labelled or represented publicly:

In the case of marginalized youth, how place - especially residential place - is socially represented significantly influences on how young people think about themselves, including who they are right now and who they might become. (Prince, 2014, p. 709)

Prince’s (2014) study provides a seminal grounding point for further research around the connection between place attachment and young people’s visions of the future. Specifically, she calls for future research to investigate whether there is a correlation between young people’s positive place attachment and a more “expansive” future self-concept (Prince, 2014, p. 712).

This review of children and young people’s geographies provide a vital grounding for this thesis both methodologically and theoretically. Methodologically, children and young people’s geographies have informed this thesis through drawing attention to the need to

consider young people not through focusing on stage-of-life or transitions but as active agents (Panelli *et al.*, 2007a; Skelton, 2002). Theoretically, the concept of “agency within liminality” (Wood, 2016) and tactics to achieve spatial agency (Valentine, 2004), will be vital to understanding young people’s place relationship in the context of their small home towns.

#### 2.4 Regional development and social sustainability

A widespread social and economic change has been documented in the Australian countryside (see for instance, Argent, Tonts, Jones, & Holmes, 2011; Budge, 2006; Budge & Martin, 2011; Luck, Race, & Black, 2011; Ragusa, 2011b). A shifting global economy and technological and commercial changes in agricultural practices have resulted in fairly widespread changes in the employment and cultural landscape of rural Australia. In this context, different models of planning and development provide insight into the way that planners cater for people’s needs in engaging with space and place in regional towns.

A significant research focus has emerged in the field of creative city planning. In *The Creative City*, Landry and Bianchini (1995) write of the importance of creativity in contributing to the prosperity of places. While planners often get caught up in devoting expenditure to hard infrastructure – roads, car parks, built form – the more important work of creative city building lies in the development and deployment of soft infrastructure (Landry and Bianchini, 1995). This includes things like:

Training initiatives for skills enhancement, the encouragement of a lively night-time economy, grants to voluntary organisations to develop social networks or social innovations and the decentralisation of powers to build up local capacity and encourage people to have a stake in the running of their neighbourhoods. (Landry & Bianchini, 1995, p. 22)

It is not only these soft and hard infrastructures that contribute to the creative city and its prosperity. Landry and Bianchini (1995, p. 21) and Landry (2006) argue that there are aspects of place that are affective, embodied and rather intangible that contribute to the desirability of a place, and people's desires to actively engage with their communities. Like Landry and Bianchini (1995), Richard Florida (2002, 2005), too, sees the value of sense of place and creativity in contributing to the prosperity of cities. However, rather than focusing on building vibrancy and liveability of a place to build prosperity from within, Florida (2002, 2005) examines the features that exist in urban locations that attract high numbers of creative workers to migrate from other places. Florida's (2002) thesis is that the creative class – made up of IT professionals, designers, artists, researchers, scientists, and others who are paid to create – is the class of workers (often entrepreneurs) that is able to earn more money and build the economic wealth of a city (p. 21). Creative class migrants are attracted to “abundant high-quality amenities and experiences, an openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else, the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people” (Florida, 2002, p. 219).

Separately, Landry and Florida have both travelled widely, including multiple trips to Australia to speak to organisations and consult with state and local governments about how to measure the creative capacity of places and how to harness and strengthen qualities of place that are attractive to the creative class (see for instance R. Atkinson & Easthope, 2009, p. 67; Green & Rood, 2011; Unknown, 2016). In the Australian state of Victoria, the work of both Florida and Landry has been cited or used directly in a regional and creative development government plans and strategies. For instance, Creative Victoria (2015) uses Florida's (2002) work to correlate creativity with economic benefit (p. 18). Wellington Shire Council (2016) – a regional shire in Gippsland, uses Landry's concept of the creative city to drive their *Arts and Cultural Strategy* – focusing on creative place making and collaboration. Arts Victoria's *The Role of Arts and Culture in Liveability* report recommends harnessing

Florida's notions of what makes a place attractive to the creative class to attract migrants to regional Victoria (Arts Victoria, 2008, pp. 7-8). The *Regional Plan* for Western Melbourne also directly cites Florida's (2002) work to argue for the correlation between investment in performing arts and other creative fields and the ability to attract skilled workers (Western Melbourne RDA Committee, 2015, p. 28). At a cursory glance, it appears that plans and strategies that cite Landry, are more likely to promote creative community building from within, while plans that cite Florida are more likely to use place making to encourage the immigration of skilled, creative class worker. A more extensive review of Landry and Bianchini's and Florida's approaches as applied in Australian regional planning and development would be insightful, but is not within the scope of this Literature Review.

In the fields of regional development, cultural planning and human geography in Australia, there has been considerable scrutiny of the effectiveness and transferability of a creative city approach – especially in rural areas and provincial cities (such critiques are predominantly aimed at Florida's creative class thesis, rather than at Landry and Bianchini). The range of critiques are highlighted here and discussed in more depth below. The creative migration approach to regional development has been criticised for its narrow and exclusive definition of creativity (Ashton, C. Gibson, & R. Gibson, 2014; Barnes, Waitt, Gill, & C. Gibson, 2006; C. Gibson, Warren, & Gallan, 2013; Stevenson, 2013), for its lack of specificity and understanding of local context (Barnes *et al.*, 2006; Stevenson, 2013; Waitt & C. Gibson, 2009). Further critiques exist of the view that migration is a prerequisite for regional economic development generally (Stockdale, 2006). The approach has been held to account for marginalising existing non-creative-class communities who have often occupied an area long before the creative migration occurs (R. Atkinson & Easthope, 2009; Barnes *et al.*, 2006; C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Rainnie, 2005) and also for its application of urban and cosmopolitan frameworks in provincial and regional contexts (Stevenson, 2013; Waitt & C. Gibson, 2009).

A regional development approach premised on the migration of creative workers has been criticised for doing little to improve the situation for existing residents of regional communities that are already experiencing disadvantage. Concerns are primarily that this type of regeneration leads to rising house prices in desirable areas and subsequently displaces other residents (Barnes *et al.*, 2006; Morrison, 2001 as cited in A. Bishop & Han; C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Peck, 2005; {Argent, 2013 #217;Tonts, 2005 #182}). Florida's (2013) more recent work has even identified that the clustering of creative industries has provided "little in the way of trickle down benefits to service blue collar workers". Waitt and C. Gibson (2009) note that "urban regeneration fuelled by the desire to make places more 'creative' thus exacerbates social dislocation" (p. 1228). Creative city renewal strategies have often arisen because of the perceived need to fix areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, rather than working with communities in these areas to build capacity and engagement as a more holistic and sustainable solution (p. 1228).

A range of authors have claimed that the privileging of creative industries in the context of regional economic development is the embodiment of neoliberalism, privileging success of entrepreneurs, whilst not acknowledging or addressing other structural factors that might contribute to social stratification (Edensor *et al.*, 2010; C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Ray, 2011). In fact, "hipsters and artists", who often pave the way for the creative class adoption of place, have been described as the "foot soldiers of neoliberalism" (S. Pritchard, 2016, para. 1). Ross (2013) critiques the economic structures enabled by the creative industries, which actually work to garner free labour. The 2002 Australian *State of the Regions Report* commissioned by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) applied Florida's creativity index to assess Australian regions and cities and promote ways to enhance their creativity (National Economics, 2002). C. Gibson and Klocker (2005) argue that the index applies a narrow understanding of creativity and judges places on their capacity to perform within that narrowly defined creativity. The main issue with this neoliberal approach is that



the regions' successfulness on the creativity index "mirrored other, already existing, indicators of socio-economic status" (C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005, p. 97). This means that regions performing well on the creativity index already have significant populations of creative class people. However those that underperformed have higher proportions of production and service classes. One serious deficiency in this planning approach, argue C. Gibson and Klocker (2005), is that areas that did not perform well on the creativity index, were "reconstructed as 'problem' regions that 'lack' creativity" but the causes of disparity were not acknowledged or addressed (p. 95). Strong arguments exist for addressing inequality, as Baum, O'Connor and Stimson (2005) argue, a significant gap between advantaged and disadvantaged populations has negative implications for the broader economy as well as for social justice and equity. The creative class is in a growing state of advantage because of how its work is highly valued within the contemporary global economy (Florida, 2002, p. 8; Reich, 1992, p. 2). Hence the intentional attraction of creative migrants as a fix for regional development is likely to deepen social stratification.

In examining relative disadvantage and advantage across Australia's cities and regions, Baum, Stimson and O'Connor (2005) note that within a global, knowledge-based economy there is a growing distinction between what they call "good jobs" and "vulnerable jobs" (p.2.5). Stable and rewarding jobs exist in the creative economy for those who are well educated and work creatively. Whereas, other non-creative jobs may provide lower income, be less secure and more susceptible to restructuring or other changes. Compounding this distinction in Australia is that nearly 50% of jobs in the lowest skill levels were casual, whereas just 14% of jobs at the highest skill level were casual (Baum, O'Connor, *et al.*, 2005, p. 2.4). There is also a huge disparity in unemployment rates in occupations across skill levels – with low unemployment in highly skilled occupations and high unemployment in low skilled occupations (Baum, O'Connor, *et al.*, 2005, p. 2.4).

Much of the research discussed examines the impacts of creative city planning as a means of encouraging creative migration. C. Gibson (2008), on the other hand, examines the role of the creative industries – specifically the music industry – in slowing or reversing youth out-migration in northern New South Wales. The creative industries may be particularly effective in “ameliorating the social and economic conditions that underpin youth unemployment problems” and thus potentially mitigate youth outmigration from regional areas (p. 184). The creative industries can be particularly well-suited to retaining young people: as they require technical knowledge and skills which are taught in schools and are based on creating products which need to be aligned to certain style and trends that younger people are often more in touch with (p. 187). C. Gibson writes:

I would argue that promoting the creative industries could more indirectly underpin important socialisation strategies for regions that are fragmented, and for young people who are rarely told the vital message ... that they belong and are valued for their potential contributions to the cultural life of the places in which they grow up. (p. 193)

However, through the examination of the case study area C. Gibson identifies that issues in cultural planning, such as venue licensing negatively affected the efficacy of the music industry in the region to engage, and maintain engagement, with young people. While a planning approach premised on attracting creative classes to a region has been critiqued for deepening social stratification, perhaps it is also possible that hosting creative industries and creative city planning in regional areas could have positive implications for young people. The following section of the Literature Review now moves to discuss evidence for positive implications of engagement with creative practice through arts and culture before moving on to discuss emergent themes in cultural planning.

### 2.4.1 Understanding the value and benefits of culture

While a creative city approach to regional revitalisation has attracted criticism for not responding to local needs and concerns (as described earlier in this review), there is evidence to suggest creativity has a range of positive effects for people, especially in disadvantaged communities. Many arts and cultural impact studies take the form of self-reported evaluations of particular programs, projects or institutions (see for instance Arts Victoria, 2003, 2008, 2014). These studies examine the effects of arts engagement on participants and the artists or practitioners involved. For the most part, these report qualitative benefits that are intangible and often difficult to quantify. Tony Newman *et al.* (2003), conducted a review of studies that measure the social benefits of community-based arts projects and identified that positive change was registered in four different areas as follow. First, personal change, identified by “making new friends, being happier, more creative and confident”; second, social change caused by bridging social capital and “stronger sense of ‘locality’”; third, economic change exhibited by increased number of jobs and investment; and finally, educational change, measured by improved school performance and engagement (Newman *et al.*, 2003, p. 318). In a report on the role of arts in the revitalisation of rural and remote communities in Australia, Dunphy (2009) identifies that the role of arts in this context extends to: contributing to economic vitality; increasing awareness and value placed on environmental sustainability; enhancing social equity and civic engagement and also contributing to overall cultural vitality of a region.

Studies of the positive impacts of arts and culture in rural areas or marginal, disadvantaged communities are not only limited to arts attendance and participation. Other research has also examined the beneficial features of small social history and cultural heritage museums in regional or rural areas. For instance, Burton and Griffin (2008) examine the social value of small museums in regional communities claim that these small institutions contribute to

social capital, foster community pride and enhance sense of belonging among local residents. Kelly (2006) has also examined the social impact of museums in small towns and found that they are associated with bonding and bridging social capital, pride in local history and traditions and sense of belonging.

Julia Anwar McHenry is one of few researchers who have used quantitative measures to assess the relationship between arts engagement and social wellbeing in rural areas. Anwar McHenry's work in Western Australia revealed that arts engagement in regional and rural area closely aligns with wellbeing (2009, 2013), enhanced social inclusion (2011), improved life satisfaction and stronger bridging and bonding social capital (2005). Other researchers have looked more specifically at the benefits of arts attendance and participation on mental health (Kelaher *et al.*, 2014), or education (Imms, Jeanneret, Stevens-Ballenger, & Victoria, 2011), and further intrinsic benefits including: pleasure, cognitive growth, social bonds, expression of communal meanings, intellectual stimulation, emotional resonance and spiritual value (Radbourne *et al.*, 2010). So, while creative city planning in a rural context may be said to damage social cohesion and contribute to social dislocation, there is a wide range of stated benefits of engagement with creativity and culture, which could potentially ameliorate this effect.

In part informed by the growing appreciation of the benefits of arts and culture on local communities, cultural planning has begun to be popularly understood as a core component of the responsibility of local government (Ashton & Boaden, 2013; Dunphy, Metzke, & Tavelli, 2013; Stevenson, 2004). Grogan and Mercer's (1995) *The Cultural Planning Handbook* identifies that the role of a cultural plan is to help local governments work towards twin goals of social development and economic development. "Cultural policy", write Grogan and Mercer, "can be viewed as a 'mediator' between the profit and efficiency objectives of economic policy and the human development, access and participation objectives of a social policy" (Grogan *et al.*, 1995, p. 5). In this sense, culture has come to be

seen by local governments as a fourth pillar of sustainable development (for instance, United Cities and Local Governments, 2008). The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) statement on sustainable development recognises that “the fundamental purpose of governance is to work towards a healthy, safe, tolerant, and creative society” (p. 8). Creativity, as part of cultural development is now widely understood as a core component of the agendas of local government.

Boaden and Ashton (2013) argue “the key is to use cultural planning and creativity to develop robust arguments that foster support for genuine social and cultural improvements within places” rather than focusing solely on than a creative class attraction for regional development (p. 29). In this sense, cultural planning is seen to be able to bridge the often dichotomous divide between community strengthening or community cultural development and economic development (Ashton & Boaden, 2013; Grogan *et al.*, 1995). Cultural planning is ultimately associated with planning for the provision and support of local cultural assets, which are “aspects of local culture, both tangible and intangible” and can be the bedrock of a “liveable, inclusive and responsive community” (Ashton & Boaden, 2013, p. 24, see also Arts Victoria, 2008). An engagement with the field of cultural planning for this thesis has been vital in forming the scope and dimensions of the investigation.

Manzo and Perkins (2006) work to illuminate the linkages between place attachment research and community planning. While both fields have mutual synergies and needs there has been little work that actually draws the two together (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Within both place attachment research and community planning literature, parallel discussions have emerged on themes of community strengthening, social capital, and active citizenship. Manzo and Perkins (2006) argue that a multidisciplinary approach that takes into account physical, social, political and economic dimensions is essential for community development and planning (p. 336). Contemporary aspects of cultural planning allow for the identification

of a breadth of things that may be considered important cultural features of a place without being biased by our pre-conceptions of what is important, what is art, or what is culture.

## 2.5 Definitions of key concepts

This final part of the Literature Review presents theoretical definitions of three key concepts that relate to this research: culture, social capital, cultural capital. An understanding of culture is vital to the research as it forms part of the central research question: *in what ways do the cultural features of small towns affect young people's place attachment?* A range of other theoretical concepts have emerged in the research findings and associated literature. For the most part, these are presented in a relevant thematic chapter discussing the research findings, for instance, Chapter 8 engages with theories of surveillance, and Chapter 9 with theories of mobility. Two further concepts, social capital and cultural capital, have arisen or are touched on in a range of thematic contexts, so are worth defining separately here, rather than embedded in the chapters presenting the research findings.

### 2.5.1 Culture

The term culture can often be taken as encapsulating arts and/or heritage (see Anderson & Malone, 2013, p. 7). As such, it is important to be careful when choosing words used in a line of questioning to understand cultural value in place. A range of the literature measuring the social and wellbeing impact of cultural engagement focuses on visual, literary and performance arts (Duxbury, Garrett-Petts, & MacLennan, 2015; Stevenson, 2013). However, this thesis will look at a far broader conceptualisation of culture – as it relates to place and young people's experience within it.

In his *Keywords* Raymond Williams (1987) charts the historical progression of the meanings and use of the term culture. He notes three broad areas in which the term is used: First “to describe a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development”; second to

describe the way of life – of a group of people, an era or “humanity in general”; and finally, to describe “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” (Williams, 1987, p. 92). While in the 1980s, Williams noted that this last definition was the most common use of the term, he also describes a tension with the use of the term, which “has been connected to superior knowledge... refinement ... and distinctions between ‘high’ art (culture) and popular art and entertainment” (Williams, 1987, p. 92). Perhaps in the latter part of the twentieth century, the term culture had come to stand for high art as Williams describes in his final definition, and thus seen as something that was divisive through being exclusionary. Culture in actual terms however, has a much broader and more inclusive meaning. For instance, anthropologist Cedric Dover (1956) defined culture in the 1950s as “a dynamic, integrative totality of beliefs, customs, and skills” that are developed, shared and used by people to “enrich their personalities and ease their relations with each other in the particular societies in which they live” (p. 281). In this sense, a cultural output or art-form is only one small element of culture – and can perhaps be understood as an expression of a culture rather than as culture itself. Culture is vital to our existence, as it “contains the myths, codes, conventions and techniques without which social living is impossible” (Dover, 1956, p. 281).

More recently, in a cultural planning handbook, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, cultural analyst Jon Hawkes (2001) identifies two key definitions of culture. The first regards the different ways in which identities, knowledge, meanings, beliefs and values are socially produced and externally expressed (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3). Culture secondly is defined as:

The “way of life” of a particular set of humans: customs, faiths and conventions; codes of manners, dress, cuisine, language, arts, science, technology, religion and rituals; norms and regulations of behaviour, traditions and institutions (Hawkes, 2001, p. 3).

What is described here is the totality and all-encompassing nature of culture. For culture comprises all our domestic, social, working and political lives. In discussing the link between culture and sustainability, Hawkes (2001) continues that “culture is not the decoration added after a society has dealt with its basic needs. Culture is the basic need – it is the bedrock of society” (p. 3).

In the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), UNESCO defines culture as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 2001). For UNESCO culture serves as both the fulcrum of our daily lives as well as the outputs/products of our meaning making – as in rituals, customs, artworks, and practices. Hence, in exploring the cultural features of small towns that engender attachment in young people, this research will seek to examine both the externalised outputs of culture (works of art, fashions, trends, customs), as well as the more inherent, intangible side of local culture as found in values, sentiments, or knowledge.

### 2.5.2 Social capital

Social capital has been conceptualised as the resources that are made available to a person based upon their social network (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 85). For Bourdieu (2011), social capital is bound in other forms of capital – as social capital “exerts a multiplier effect on the capital [a person] possesses in [their] own right (p. 86). In his widely cited *Bowling Alone* Putnam (2000) conceptualises two forms of social capital – bridging and bonding: “Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40” (p. 23). Social capital has been identified as having a range of benefits to the individual and communities: enhancing the capacity of a community to problem solve, enabling ease of business and socialising, and enabling the flow of information which



enables individuals and communities to meet their goals (Putnam, 2000, p. 288). As a resource, social capital has been identified as significant in contributing to the sustainability of regional communities as it can lead to developing shared goals, as well as encouraging people to become engaged and invested in the future of their own communities (Cocklin and Alston, 2003, p. 4). However, Mowbray (2004) provides a more critical reflection on social capital, noting that governments in Australia have commonly invested in short term projects to improve social capital in a region as a means of “deflecting liabilities for various problems away from themselves towards localities and families” (p. 43). As such, too much of a strong focus on social capital in regional communities could have the effect of obfuscating other issues regarding investments in infrastructure and resources.

Researchers have also identified that social capital can be associated with other negative consequences, for instance, close bonding social capital can lead to sectarianism, ethnocentrism and corruption (Putnam, 2000, p. 8). In other words, social capital can result in the “exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward levelling norms” (Portes, 1998, p. 15).

This thesis takes a grounded approach to social capital, seeking to understand the qualitative nature of social capital as it emerges in empirical evidence through this investigation of young people’s experiences and relationships with their home towns.

### 2.5.3 Cultural capital

Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital has enabled researchers to examine features of class outside of (but related to) production and labour. Bourdieu’s framework for cultural capital contains three interrelated conceptualisations: embodied cultural capital (mannerisms, accents, habits), objectified cultural capital (material cultural goods), and institutionalised cultural capital (accolades, educational qualifications) (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 82). Here we focus

on the first two forms of cultural capital – embodied and objectified as they relate to this research.

While there are nuanced difference between Bourdieu’s concepts of embodied cultural capital and Bourdieu’s related concept of *habitus*, for my purposes here they seem interchangeable. Embodied cultural capital is the “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 82) while habitus is defined as “a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking” (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27). The habitus is developed early in life through immersion in one’s immediate environment, thus relates to aspects of class, family and place (Threadgold, 2018, p. 39). Habitus is argued to be implicated in the reproduction of social class (for instance Allen & Hollingworth, 2013; Hollingworth & Williams, 2009) and is interrelated with place, for if “the habitat shapes the habitus, the habitus also shapes the habitat” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 128).

Objectified cultural capital is usually defined by the acquired cultural goods such as art, fashion and books, but also the consumption of cultural goods such as music, television and film media, live performance, etcetera. While embodied cultural capital is ingrained and long-lasting, objective cultural capital is “transmissible in its materiality” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 85). However, it can also be either of material value or symbolic value, or indeed both at once. For instance, Currid-Halkett discusses the consumption practices of what she describes as an “aspirational class” in America, who privilege shopping local and artisanal, buying organic foods and ethically-produced fashion “because these signifiers of cultural capital reveal social and environmental consciousness” (2017, p. 53). Here consumption practices become symbolic of class-based value-systems. In a similar vein, Threadgold’s (2018) study of DIY a subcultural music scene in Australia identifies a group of people who actively privilege (off-kilter) cultural capital over and above economic capital:

They may be relatively high in subcultural and even cultural capital and may indeed function as cultural intermediaries, but they are far too low in economic capital to fit the 'dominant' category. (p. 140)

In this sense we can begin to see how cultural capital can provide a useful tool for examining class-related issues outside of production and labour – or as Hollingworth and Williams (2009) put it, to have a “cultural approach to class” (p. 468). Researchers have progressively more commonly engaged in conceptualisations of cultural capital in order to examine the interrelationship between social class and culture (for instance, Allen & Hollingworth, 2013; Bridge, 2006; Currid-Halkett, 2017; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Marzi, 2017; Savage, 2010; Skeggs, 2004a, 2004b; Skeggs & Loveday, 2012; Threadgold, 2018).

## 2.6 Conclusion

This Literature Review has examined existing bodies of work across a diverse but related range of disciplines. At the centre of all this research is an emphasis on the multifaceted relationships between people and place and the notion of how place can be managed in order to engender improved social and economic outcomes. This cross-disciplinary Literature Review has helped to inform the design of the research for this thesis.

Through an engagement with place attachment research and research on rural youth outmigration I have undertaken to closely examine the dimensions of place that affect attachment for young people in regional Victorian towns (Argent & Walmsley, 2008; Gabriel, 2002; C. Gibson & Argent, 2008; Lewicka, 2011; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). An engagement with children and young people's geographies has informed this thesis both methodologically and theoretically. Children and young people's geographies emphasise the importance of understanding the young person as an active agent rather than a “human becoming” (Holloway & Valentine, 2000a, p. 5). Avoiding a focus on youth transitions or on conceptualising the young person as in-a-state-of-growing-competence are vital to offering

full relevance to the experience of young people (Panelli, Punch, & Robson, 2007b; Skelton, 2002). In examining the young person as adults' spatially marginalised "other", a focus on various tactics employed by young people as they seek and achieve spatial agency is highly pertinent to this study (Joelsson, 2015a; Valentine, 2004; van der Burgt, 2015; Wood, 2016). The research also aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between the qualitative nature of young people's place experience and their visions of the future (Prince, 2014).

An engagement with research surrounding creative city planning in regional areas helps to inform this thesis in a range of ways. The understanding provided here helps to situate the thesis in light of growing rural changes as identified in the preceding introductory chapter: the rising cost of housing, changing regional migration patterns, and attempts by regions to harness cultural elements of place to encourage migration of creative classes. This understanding has driven the choice of the two case study towns. Castlemaine, very much down the track of creative gentrification – often nicknamed "North Northcote" for the amount of inner urban re-locators who have a very visual presence there (see for instance Hudson, 2014; Willcocks, 2016). The other, Maryborough, does not appear to figure on the radar of creative migrants or cultural tourism. The research reviewed here identifies that there exists considerable challenges with the creative migration approach to regional development (see for instance Barnes *et al.*, 2006; Edensor *et al.*, 2010; C. Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Rainnie, 2005; Waitt & C. Gibson, 2009). However, there also exist considerable evidence to suggest that engagement with creativity and culture are positive for communities and social wellbeing (see for instance, Anwar McHenry, 2009; Ashton & Boaden, 2013; Mills & Brown, 2004). Furthermore, the creative industries are also hailed as being positive for engaging young people and potentially mitigating the rural outmigration of young people (C. Gibson, 2008). This complex set of circumstances provide the context

within which rural young people engage or do not engage with their home towns, and from which they must make choices about their futures.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction to the methodology

This chapter presents the ethnographic methodology that has been devised to address the research questions of the thesis. That is, to understand *in what ways do the cultural features of small towns affect young people's attachment to place?* I establish the methodological scaffolding which is guided by a social constructionist epistemology. I then contend that the research question, containing three main subjects of study – place attachment, young people, and small towns – invites engagement with three interrelated academic focus areas, place attachment, cultural geography and anthropology. I engage with theories and conceptualisations of space within these three disciplines to support the adherence to a social constructionist epistemology. The field of inquiry of place attachment, and the disciplines of geography and anthropology are engaged with in a manner to provide some guiding principles and theoretical understandings of people and culture, places and spaces, and attachments between people and places. Then ethnography is identified as the methodological approach for the course of this research. This distils down into the qualitative research method adopted, which is auto-driven photo-elicitation, supported by a wide-ranging background research about each case study town. The analysis framework adopted, *spatializing culture* (Low, 2016), is then described and justified. Following this the application of the research methods are explicated in detail.

### 3.2 Research methodology

In his book *The Foundations of Social Science Research*, Michael Crotty (1998) suggests “methodological scaffolding”, in order to make some sense of the methodological approaches available in the social sciences, which “may appear more as a maze than as pathways to orderly research” (pp. 1-3). The methodological scaffolding designed for this thesis, adapted from Crotty (1998) is presented in the diagram below. While the diagram

presents a top-down approach, from epistemology, through theoretical perspective, methodology and then methods, this was not arrived at in such a neat and orderly manner. The design of the research methodology was rather more recursive, and consisted of more of a bottom up approach – starting with thinking about young people in small towns, and how to capture a sense of how they engage with and value the place in which they live. An ethnographic approach using auto-driven photo-elicitation was devised in the first instance, before circling around to consider how place and space and culture have been theorised, and how the method could inform and be informed by theory related to the relevant academic disciplines of geography, sociology, place attachment and anthropology. Nevertheless, for ease of reading, the methodology is presented here in the order of the methodological scaffolding.

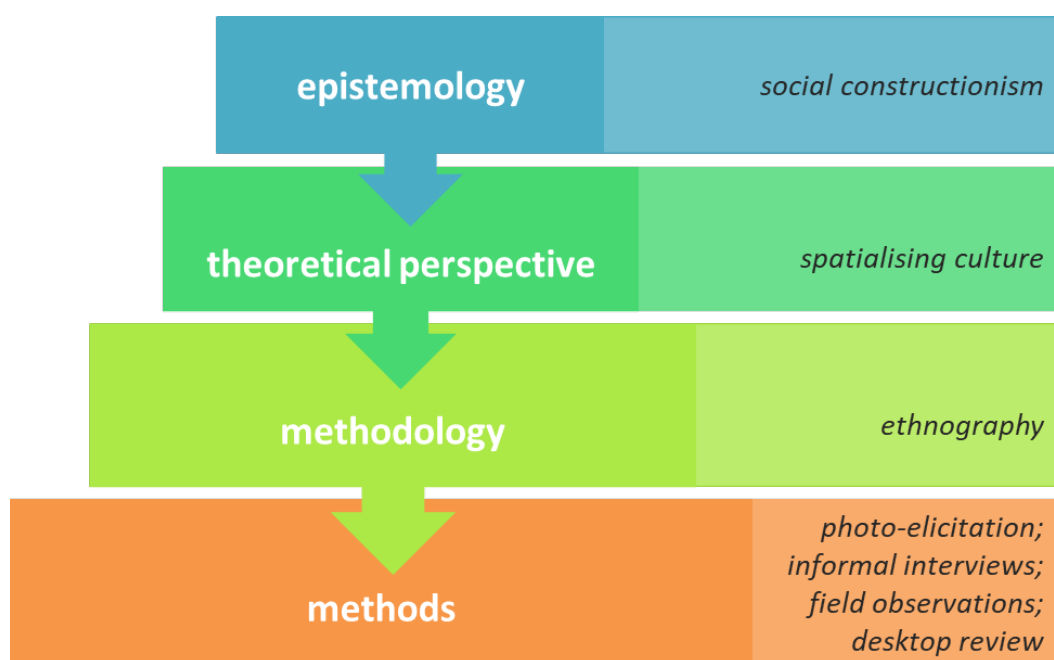


Figure 3 Methodological scaffolding

Source: Author adapted from Crotty (1998, p. 4).

### 3.2.1 Epistemological outlook – social constructionism

The primary research question for this thesis (*in what ways do the cultural features of small towns affect young people’s place attachment*) contains three subjects of study – the

cultural features of small towns, place attachment, and young people. This is illustrated in the diagram below in which the objects of study appear horizontally and three related fields of study appear vertically. In order to address the research questions I have devised a methodology that enmeshes epistemological outlooks from the related disciplines of human geography – the study of places and their interplay with people; place attachment research – the study of the relationship between people and places; and anthropology – the study of human norms, values and behaviours within the context of place. Below I examine the ways in which researchers in these have conceptualized place and cultures. These conceptualisations provide a valuable means of establishing the epistemological outlook for this research. The epistemology will ultimately act as a guiding philosophy, aiding in and being tested by the interpretation of the qualitative data.

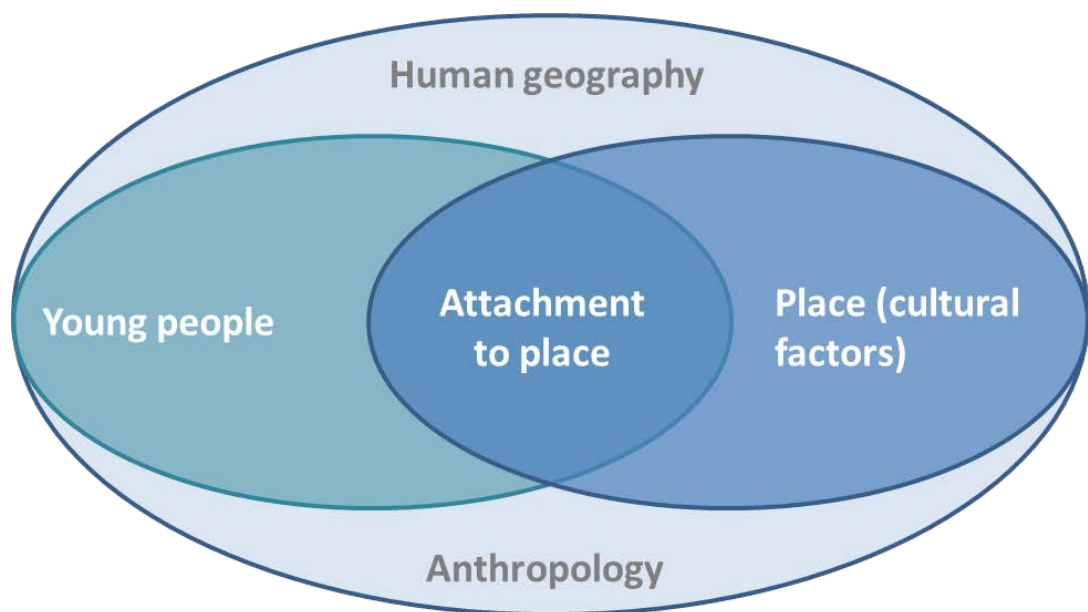


Figure 4 Subjects of study and associated academic fields

Source: Author

Manzo and Devine-Wright's (2014) edited book *Place attachment: Advances in theory, methods, and applications* provides a comprehensive account of contemporary theory, methods and applications in place attachment research. In presenting a wide range of approaches and conceptualisations around place attachment, Manzo and Devine-Wright



(2014) acknowledge that the field fits quite comfortably alongside social sciences that have been influenced by post structuralism and postmodernism. While the social (and cultural) element(s) of place are vital to place attachment research, “place”, writes Lewicka (2011), “defined as a ‘meaningful location’, is an entity that has a social dimension, but also a palpable and very physical basis” (p. 213). In other words, place attachment research generates understandings about the relationship between people and places through layering meaning from both a social and a physical perspective.

Human geography is the study of the interplay between people, the places they inhabit and the environments that surround them, across space and over time (Massey, 1984). Cultural geography seeks to understand the specifically cultural factors at play within this dynamic. A number of geographers describe a significant shift in geography research approach that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century in reaction to a quantitative revolution in the social sciences (Massey, 1984; Shaw, DeLyser, & Crang, 2015; Tuan, 2004). Shaw *et al.* (2015) argue that this shift was most significantly driven by feminist geographies in response to the perceptions and experiences of women being largely overlooked by quantitative geography (p. 212). The feminist change in human geography helped to bring to light that subjective experience plays an immense role in the creation of meaning around place.

Eminent geographer Doreen Massey (1984) charts the wave of academic positivism in the social sciences through the mid part of the twentieth century and tried to align itself with science – understanding and measuring phenomena scientifically and quantitatively.

However, Massey (1984) notes that a backlash against this positivism took place in the 1970s in which it was argued that space could not possibly be seen as an object of study that was separable from the social world. In some ways, the form of positivism that Massey describes in mid-century geographical research took the form of environmental determinism in which people in particular places were considered to be the products of their natural environment. However, she notes that the premise has since been argued against “by rejecting the notion

of an unmediated effect of nature on society” (1984, p. 8). In other words, the relationship between the natural environment and society has come to be seen as more of a two-way engagement. Yi-Fu Tuan (2004) also describes the change that has occurred in geographical epistemologies – he writes that we now see a region as a “collage of geography, memory, and sentiment, welded together and burnished by art and ideology” (p. 729). An understanding of place or a region now must engage with the physical landscape, the past, and emotional associations as well as cultural and political processes that “weld” or fuse together – an ongoing process that actually forms a region. Given the task at hand – to understand the cultural factors at play in contributing to young people’s place attachment in two same-but-different regional Victorian towns – it is apt that we understand the region as a collage such as this – it is formed in the minds and actions of the inhabitants, place as it stands, is inherently cultural.

As with human geography, anthropology was historically a discipline that adopted a positivist theoretical outlook; one that attempted to provide scientific classification and categorization to groups of people and particular places (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b; Madden, 2010; Pink, 2011). Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) argue that defining groups of people and spaces as distinctive, whole, or bounded entities is problematic:

The distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is predicated on a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy “naturally” discontinuous spaces. (p. 33)

Contemporary anthropology however, understands that the cultures of groups of people in geographic areas do not exist separately to economic and political flows of imperialism and capitalism, and they aren’t static, self-contained or wholly distinct. Cultures are fluid and mobile, they exist in margins and there is global shifting and sharing of and between cultures. Space has always been connected, continuous; even before and during the throes

of imperialism, and even more so now in the age of late capitalism, globalisation and mass migration. The idea of anything to do with place and culture as being wholly naturally determined is now fully disputed in the fields of both cultural geography and anthropology. As Gupta and Ferguson state culture and place are not discrete typological entities, but are constructed socially and historically, rather than “given natural facts” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b, p. 4). Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) use the term spatializing cultures to describe relegating cultures to a specific locality as part of a typological enterprise that is at odds with contemporary perspectives of pluralism, hybridity, interconnectedness and globalism (p. 4). Alternatively, Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) argue that space provides a grounding within which cultures are located and therefore remains front and central in anthropological work. However, Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) do not suggest locating culture in a discrete spatial bubble, but rather to bring forth the presence of space through a range of theoretical aspects including understandings of how space is embodied, gendered, inscribed, contested and transnational as well as examining spatial tactics of minorities. So, whilst cultures do exist in space, that space cannot be claimed to be discontinuous or separable from other geographical spaces in the world. The aim of contemporary anthropology then is to explore “the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, p. 43).

In examining the role of cultural features of place that can contribute to place attachment in young people it is pertinent to situate this study within a social constructionist epistemology. For instance, Massey (1984) writes of the theoretical shift in human geography:

There are no such things as spatial processes without social content “the spatial”, it was pronounced, and quite correctly, “does not exist as a separate realm. Space is a social construct”. (p. 2)

In this case, meaning is not simply socially constructed from the minds of humans in-and-of themselves, rather meaning is created through the relationship between subject and object. Crotty (1988) refers to this as intentionality. He explains: “What intentionality brings to the fore is interaction between subject and object. The image evoked is that of humans engaging with their world. It is in this interplay that meaning is born” (Crotty, 1988, p. 45). Thus, this research examining the ways in which the cultural features of place affect young people’s place attachment, aims to reveal meaning through looking at the ways in which young people are engaging with their world. This investigation of young people’s social construction of place is also informed by political and economic processes outside of the young people’s control that contribute to the features of the place in which they are located.

### 3.2.2 Theoretical perspective – spatialising culture

In *Doing Critical Ethnography*, Thomas (2011) argues that theory-driven ethnography is “domesticated” and suffers an “intellectual cost” (p. 8). In other words, dogmatic adherence to high theory and can result in limiting the outcomes of an ethnographic project. This kind of deductive approach to reasoning is not considered pragmatic for ethnographies that truly value qualitative data. However, as P. Atkinson (2015) notes, it is important to acknowledge that this does not reflect an ethnographer entering “the field with no prior ideas”. P. Atkinson describes theory as “ideas”, and argues that through the analysis of data ideas build upon each other and deepen a theoretical perspective (p. 38). Madden (2010) puts it another way, suggesting that ethnographers are benefited most by finding a middle road between high-level, top down theory and data-driven bottom-up theory, he argues: “*theory is our tool to master, it should not master us*” (p. 18 emphasis in original). Madden (2010) suggests that analysis of data in ethnography occurs through a process of recursive reasoning.

Hence, in seeking a theoretical perspective for this thesis I have sought to adopt a perspective that could be applied pragmatically as a tool, rather than as a top-down driver of data analysis. In using an ethnographic approach to investigate the spatial relationships of young rural people as a potentially disadvantaged, marginalised “other”, I was keen to ensure that the data would not have to be either over-stated, or pushed and shoved to fit within a strict theoretical mould. Ethnographer Setha Low (2016) has compiled a theoretical framework for ethnographies of space and place which acts as a set of theoretical frames through which ethnographic data can be interpreted. The “spatializing culture” (Low, 2016) framework or approach has been devised to complement ethnographic methods and to enable recursive reasoning. Hence it is highly suitable to apply within my research here. Low writes:

By “Spatialize” I mean to produce and locate – physically, historically, affectively and discursively – social relations, institutions, representations and practices in space. “Culture” in this context refers to the multiple and contingent forms of knowledge, power and symbolism that comprise human and nonhuman interactions; material and technological processes; and cognitive processes, including thoughts, beliefs, imaginings and perceptions. (p. 7)

As a theoretical framework, spatialising culture provides a critical and responsive tool through which to approach data analysis. The framework leans towards “grounded theory that emerges from the data in dialogue with dominant conceptual frameworks” (Low, 2016, p. 4). In other words, it allows the data to drive the story. Low (2016) presents six conceptual frames for analysing place-based ethnographic work: the social production of space; the social construction of space; embodied space; language, discourse and space; emotion, affect and space; and finally, translocal space. The key lenses of the spatialising culture framework that I will utilise for this research are the social production of space and the social construction of space. Low (2016) notes that the social production of space lens has as

“materialist emphasis” and “is useful in defining the historical emergence and political economic formation of urban space” (2016, p. 7). The social construction lens, on the other hand, “refers to the transformation of space through language, social interaction, memory, representation, behavior and use into scenes and actions that convey meaning” (Low, 2016, p. 7). This is presented in a dialogic model, visualized in the figure below.

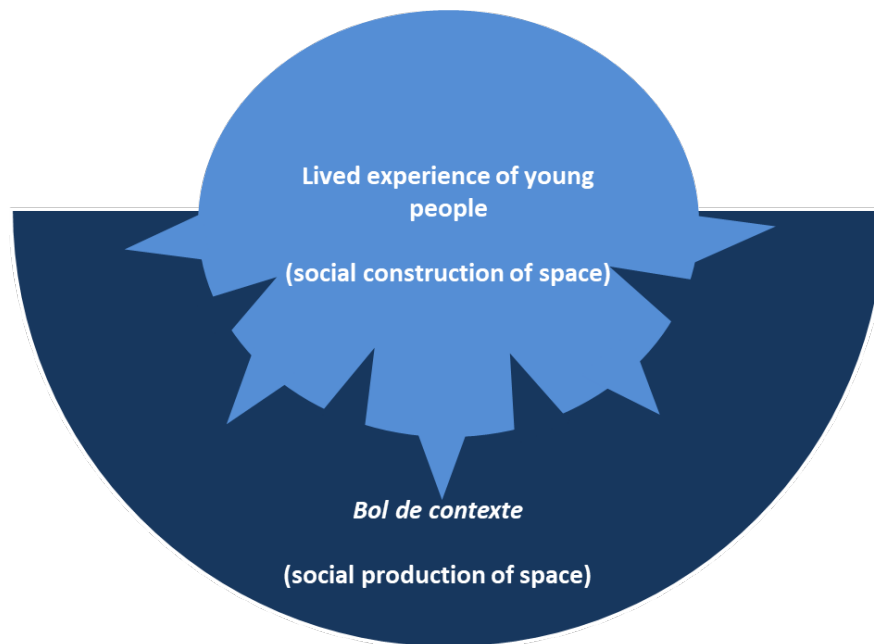


Figure 5 Dialogic model – social construction of space and social production of space

Source: Author

Place is described as the *bol de contexte*, the socially, historically, and economically produced context within in which the young research subjects have grown up and continue to live. The lived experience of young people in the town is viewed through the social construction of space lens, so we can reveal the multivariate ways in which young people socially construct their hometowns, that is, the ways in which they attribute meaning to their home town through their actions, interactions, discourse and symbolic exchanges. The model provides a means of understanding both where the socially produced place impacts the young person’s experience, and where the young person in turn, either contributes to the social production of the place itself, or where their lived experience actually provides a

divergent understanding of the place. It is important to note that the *bol de contexte* is by no means impermeable to either outside influence and translocal phenomena, and it is too, in part shaped by the young people themselves.

### 3.2.3 Methodology – ethnography

Many place attachment researchers use quantitative measures for their investigations, including scales of emotional bonding and behavioural measures. However, these methods offer little in the way of understanding the values and meanings that people derive from place and their experiences of it (Lewicka, 2011, p. 221). To answer the central research question of this thesis it is necessary to understand the meanings of places. Duxbury *et al.* (2015) argue for the use of qualitative methods in examining culture in place:

Methodologically, if one accepts that the intangible, the subjective and the immaterial are important to what culture is as an object of study, then quantitative methods alone are inadequate. (p. 227)

The investigation of the dynamics of culture in young people's place attachment for this thesis has to be about understanding values, meanings and subjective perceptions of place. In the case of this study, these will be elicited through the ethnographic gathering of perspectives of a cohort of young research participants from each case study town.

Researchers note that methods employed to uncover different dimensions of place attachment can be difficult as the majority of ways that people experience place and a lot of what people value about place are often taken-for-granted, and so not easy to identify or verbalise (see for instance, Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014; Seamon, 2014). To address this methodological difficulty, some researchers choose to use a disruption framework – that is, to investigate people's values, perceptions and attitudes toward a place once a connection to that place has been lost (for instance through natural disaster, or forcible removal, see Seamon, 2014). This reflects the timeless adage, *you don't know what you've got 'til it's*

*gone*. The process of disruption that occurs, according to Seamon (2014), is capable of rendering the taken-for-granted apparent (p. 14).

The methods that I have compiled to carry out this course of research are also aimed at rendering the taken-for-granted as apparent. However, as the focus of this research is about the contemporary lived experience of young people in particular places, a disruption framework is not achievable for this research. Instead an ethnographic study has been devised. Steve Herbert (2000) argues that ethnography as a method has much to contribute to human geography as it “provides unreplicable insight into the processes and meanings that sustain and motivate social groups” (p. 550). Ethnography is well suited to understanding people’s attachment to place because the method involves gaining a deep understanding of the participants’ emotional and sensory life, which are a vital aspect of place attachment (Herbert, 2000, pp. 552-553).

Ethnography is defined simply as “research and writing about groups of people by systematically observing and participating (to a greater or lesser degree) in the lives of the people they study” (Madden, 2010, p. 1). Ethnography has evolved as a practice of anthropology and as such, in its origins, ethnography is linked to imperialist forms of engagement, which often including supporting a colonialist agenda and working (sometimes inadvertently) to establish and ingrain inequalities between groups of people. I sit ill-at-ease with the notion of western scholars investigating exoticised “other” cultures through ethnographic methods. However, Madden (2010) reassures me that the latter part of “the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first century, have seen ethnography throw off these stereotypical images, and it is now impossible to understand ethnography as the study of the exotic ‘other’” (p. 1). These uncomfortable roots of ethnography, involving the predominantly western study of “other” cultures have been well addressed in academic discourse (for instance, see Boucher, 2018; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a; Low, 2016; Madden, 2010; Pink, 2011, 2015; Said, 1978; Soyini, 2005). In reference to the engagement with the



researched “other”, Soyini (2005) claims that critical ethnography involves not just an observation of “others, but involves “negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other's world” (p. 9).

In practice, ethnographic methods have historically been used in both anthropology and geography, and the methodology has evolved with these social science disciplines to become critical and reflexive (Setha Low, 2016; Madden, 2010; Massey, 1984; Pink, 2015; Shaw *et al.*, 2015; Thomas, 2011). Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) argue that in the contemporary era, anthropology cannot adhere to strict ethnographic participant observation alone – a method insufficient to comprehend global and placeless phenomena such as mass media and displaced peoples. However, a reconstructed or critical and reflexive anthropology, still requires a “traditional attention to the close observation of particular lives in particular places” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b, p. 25).

The traditional means of carrying out ethnographic research, participant observation – that is being both participant and observer – allows a qualitative understanding that could not be generated through interviews or surveys. Puddephatt, Shaffir and Kleinknecht (2009) argue that ethnographic methods have generally become well regarded among qualitative researchers for their “ability to offer fine grained descriptions of events and provide an in-depth examination of everyday situations” (p. 1). As such, ethnography is especially apt to reveal the “processes and meanings that undergird socio-spatial life” (Herbert, 2000, p. 550).

This choice to devise an ethnographic methodology has been made for a number of reasons. First, as Low (2016) articulates quite clearly, “ethnographers have an advantage with regard to understanding space and place because they begin their studies in the field” (p. 4). The commitment to fieldwork embedded in ethnographic methodologies enables a deep understanding of place, which is critical to ascertaining the relationship between the cultural features of a place and young people who’ve grown up there and also addresses the

research gaps identified in the Literature Review: that there is little place attachment research that examines the place dimension of place attachment (Scannell & Gifford, 2010); and that there is likewise little research that examines the role of the social, cultural and economic factors of place that affect rural young people's decisions to out-migrate (Gabriel, 2006; C. Gibson & Argent, 2008). Second, ethnography allows for and encourages a recursive approach in building an understanding about sociocultural phenomena (Madden, 2010). The data gathered through fieldwork provides a tangible evidence base that ethnographers can use to test, refute, or prove theoretical premises (Puddephatt *et al.*, 2009, pp. 1-2). In trying to understand young people's attachments to their home towns, I keenly wanted to privilege first-hand experience of young people, and create a space for these voices to be heard, and an understanding of their "storied reality" (Madden, 2010, p.6). In this sense, the research has necessitated a recursive approach.

Finally, this research is unapologetically driven by an agenda. In the face of significant relative disadvantage that is apparent in Victorian small towns I seek to know, how could the experience for young people in those places be improved? In this sense, the research fits a critical ethnography approach, as Thomas (2011, p. 4) articulates the difference "conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be". In examining commonplace events and activities, critical ethnographers are able to reveal "broader social processes of control, taming, power imbalance, and the symbolic mechanisms that impose one set of preferred meanings or behaviors over others" (Thomas, 2011, p. 9). In this sense, my research embraces what Gupta and Ferguson describe as "a willingness to interrogate, politically and historically, the apparent "given" of a world in the first place divided into 'ourselves' and 'others'" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, p. 45).

### 3.2.4 Method

The thesis as a whole consists of two phases of research. First, a wide-ranging scoping in order to establish the socially produced context of the place. This involved field observations and interviews with stakeholders supported by a desktop review. This initial phase of research endeavours to provide a deep understanding of the place in which the young person is situated as well as to highlight the different and shared challenges arising in Maryborough and Castlemaine. This relatively straightforward phase of the research is outlined in more detail in the next section following the discussion below on the main ethnographic research.

For the second and main phase of research – that which is intended to build a sense of the experience of young people in relation to the place in which they live – the ethnographic method of auto-driven photo-elicitation has been adopted. In short, this means that research participants were engaged, given disposable cameras and asked to take photographs of things that they valued (either positively or negatively) about their home towns. They were then interviewed about the photographs and their relationship to their home town.

In designing the ethnographic research methods, I had to carefully consider how I could carry out close observation of young people without, quite frankly, feeling like a creep. As Madden (2010) highlights:

An ethnographer can be both an asset and a burden to a group of participants, and ethnographers need to come to grips with just how burdensome their presence will be in the everyday lives of the participants. (p. 82)

It is in this sense, especially working with young people, that I felt it necessary to have a light touch – to have a “step-in-step-out” approach (Madden, 2010, p. 80). These are young people living in small communities, where privacy was likely to be concern in their everyday

lives. I did not want to have too much of an imposition on their lives. I wanted them to feel comfortable and open with me but not surveilled. I felt it to be ethically important to design the research methods to contain enough of a glimpse at their everyday lives to answer the research questions without imposing upon their everyday lives. Considering this, I adopted auto-driven photo-elicitation as the research method to reveal the young people's relationship with their home towns.

In drawing upon Lewicka (2011), Seamon (2014) notes that the bulk of research on place attachment asks research participants to respond explicitly, discursively and sometimes analytically to questions about their attachment to a place (p. 14). However, a significant aspect of people's engagement with place occurs beneath the level of conscious reflection. Seamon (2014) writes:

If much of the emotional fabric soldered to place is pre-reflective and thus typically beneath the level of conscious awareness, then developing a language and methodology for self-conscious elicitation is a formidable task. (p.14)

Hence, I have compiled the methods employing auto-driven photo-elicitation, in an attempt to gain some insight into this pre-reflective, emotional engagement between young people and their home towns. Young participants in each town were recruited and given disposable cameras to photograph places around their home town which they valued over the course of a couple of weeks. Photo-taking has become so commonplace in our contemporary world, so I wanted participants to be able to carry the cameras with them and photograph places spontaneously, without having to think consciously too much about why, and their reflections could be drawn out through the interview process.

The photo-elicitation approach was also devised in order to build a sense of dialogue and co-creation of findings with the research participants, as Soyini (2005) claims is vital to critical

ethnography. The method is also well-suited to a social constructionist epistemology, as Waller Farquharson and Dempsey (2016) note in their *Qualitative Methodologies Handbook*:

Within the constructivist view is the idea that it is both the researcher and the research participant who co-create findings. However research is not an innocent conversation as the researcher has an agenda. How much voice the participants are given is up to the researcher. (p. 14)

Ensuring the participants are given significant amount of agency has been a strong guiding premise in the selection of auto-driven photo-elicitation research methods. A visual study comprising of photographs generated by research participants allows for a sensory exploration of young people's perceptions of place. This aligns with Rodaway's (1994) notion of sensuous geographies – in which sense is an important element of “structuring space and defining place” (p. 4). In this regard – the visual sense, employed by research participants in taking photographs is not merely passively receiving information but is “actively involved in the structuring of that information” and therefore of making sense of the world (Rodaway, 1994, p. 4).

Auto-driven photo-elicitation is described as a collaborative method (Harper, 2012). In assessing two photo-elicitation studies with women in regional villages in China, Harper (2012) notes:

Reading these studies makes it clear that the knowledge of outside researchers, no matter how involved they might have been with the community, *could never approximate to the understanding reflected in the research images* made by the subject-collaborators. (p. 191 – emphasis added)

Thus, the extra layers of meaning and depth generated by the photographs in the research process can provide an insight that is akin to, or in some ways has the potential to yield richer results, than complete researcher participant immersion. Photo-elicitation has

increased in popularity among place attachment researchers (for instance, Beckley, Stedman, Wallace, & Ambard, 2007; Stedman, Amsden, Beckley, & Tidball, 2014; Tonge, Moore, Ryan, & Beckley, 2013). The method allows participant-generated visions of place, including “perceptions of amenities, of changes, of people and their various and conflicting roles” (Van Auken, Frisvoll, & Stewart, 2010, p. 376).

Photo-elicitation was first described by anthropologist John Collier in the 1950s, who argued that using researcher-generated photographs to guide anthropological interviews would help to elicit a more detailed and enthused response from the research subjects (Collier, 1957, p. 856, see also Collier & Collier, 1986). When used in an interview, photographic images can help to act as a “language bridge”, to stimulate memory, and “release emotional statements about the informant’s life” (Collier, 1957, p. 858). A range of researchers have since employed photo-elicitation as a method involving participant-generated images rather than researcher-generated (see for instance Beckley *et al.*, 2007; Boucher, 2018; Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008; Dona, 1989; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Harper, 2012; Packard, 2008; Stedman *et al.*, 2014; Van Auken *et al.*, 2010). Some researchers call this auto-driven photo-elicitation (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; D. Jones, 2018), and others photo-voice (Harper, 2012). I have used the term auto-driven photo-elicitation. I believe that the benefits that Collier has outlined above will exist whether the photographs are researcher-generated or participant-generated. However, auto-driven photo-elicitation is regarded to have further benefits in two particular areas, both for the research participant, and for the contribution to research. The first, most simply, is in the fact that the visual content is created directly by the research participants. As I aimed to carry out a light-touch ethnography, this provided a good medium through which I could have a close insight into the young participants’ lives, without being overly invasive. Participant generated photographs can enable the “researcher to ‘visit’ places which are a part of the daily life of participants in a subtle and non-intrusive manner” (Bennett, 2014, para. 3.2). The method can help in identifying aspects

of the everyday and taken-for-granted more perceptible (Mannay, 2010). Second, as Harper (2012) argues, the method is “based on the assumption that photographing one’s world is empowering because it leads to greater awareness of both assets and problems of communities or research situations” (p. 202). A number of other researchers have also upheld the merits of participant-driven photo-elicitation methods as empowering for the research participants and an important way to break down power relations between the researcher and the researched and is thus appropriate for work investigating vulnerable people (Copes, Tchoula, Brookman, & Ragland, 2018; Croghan *et al.*, 2008; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Stedman *et al.*, 2014, p. 120; Van Auken *et al.*, 2010). In this sense, the method has been especially valuable in studies involving young people as the research participants (Conolly, 2008; Croghan *et al.*, 2008; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Leonard & McKnight, 2014). Clark-Ibáñez (2004) specifically argues that auto-driven photo-elicitation methods are well suited to research focusing on young people as the photo-elicitation interview “is concerned with the subjective meaning of those images for the interviewee that can disrupt some of the power dynamics involved with regular interviews” (p. 1512).

### 3.2.5 Reflexivity, interpretation, authorship

As I have discussed, contemporary ethnographic research involves generating an understanding of the multitude of experiences of “other” people. For researchers engaging in ethnographic practice, it is widely accepted that we need to be self-reflexive and aware of our own involvement in the research. Soyini (2005) reminds us that this must go beyond a simple introspective self-reflection. Rather, we need to consider our own positionality in relation to the researched “others” – to seriously regard our position as being involved in dialogue with the “other” that we are researching. Soyini (2005) writes:

As we recognise the vital importance of illuminating the researcher’s positionality, we also understand that critical ethnography requires a deep and abiding dialogue with

the Other as never before. This means that our attention to ethnographic positionality still must remain grounded in the empirical world of the Other. In fact, it is this concern for the Other that demands we attend seriously to our position as researchers. (p. 9)

I have found it helpful to embed this notion within all aspects of the research – from devising and designing the methodology, applying the research methods and conducting the research, to interpreting, theorising and writing about the data.

My own self-reflection in relation to this study, and the young participants I have engaged means that I cannot help but reflect on my own years as a young person. I was born in a 1960s Bedford house bus parked in a macadamia orchard in Northland New Zealand. My parents separated when I was very young and I spent much of my childhood travelling between them, my father maintaining a somewhat alternative, off-grid lifestyle in rural areas in the South Island. Meanwhile, my mother became more upwardly mobile and suburban in the North Island cities of Wellington and Auckland. While I spent time in and attended schools in both places I grew and maintained a stronger cultural affinity with urban areas rather than rural. This was, in part, for the greater presence of youth subcultures and vibrancy associated with a more densely populated place, but also because I experienced greater social exclusion in rural areas where the unconventional lifestyle of my family was more conspicuous.

Now, after spending fifteen years living in the large city of Melbourne, I live in a small, regional Victorian town of under 2,000 people, where I am raising two young children together with their father. My concern for young, rural people and their relationship to place, then evolves in part from my own childhood experience of social exclusion in rural schools, as well as for the futures of my own children growing up in a country town. The experience of living in this small, swiftly gentrifying village also brings my concern to the



young people who might not benefit, but potentially be socially dislocated by the processes of gentrification.

In reading Geertz's (1973) writing on "thick description" (pp. 5-9) and interpretation of qualitative data as a means of eking out understandings of social codes, signification and meaning I finally realised that the "writing up" of ethnographic work is a truly creative process. Not creative in the sense that I am making something out of nothing and that the work would be purely subjective. But rather, creative in the sense that I am taking data generated from the "empirical world of the Other" (Soyini, 2005, p. 9) that previously did not exist and engaging with it in dialogue to create something new. To me this was deeply revelatory.

The notion of dialogue in carrying out the research also supports Agger's (2000) call for sociologists to re-engage with "author-present" writing (p. 237). Agger (2000) takes issue with the apparent "de-authoring" of much sociological writing. He writes it "is rarely said that [sociological papers] are written, except by qualitative sociologists prone to ethnography who recognize that *both their work and the data are narrative*" (Agger, 2000, p. 37, emphasis added). Thus in authoring my thesis as a "storied reality" (Madden, 2010, p. 6), I have attempted to remain present and conscious of the way that I have actively developed the narrative. In discussing the data, I have used the present tense, as – while the interviews took place in the past – I was keen for the sentiments of the participants to be read as though in the present. For the most part I have narratively structured the ethnographic findings chapters based upon progressing thematic development relating to individual participants' data rather than agglomerating comparative participant responses to support a theoretical concept. I have built the narrative this way in part to illustrate the diversity of participants' experience of place. Furthermore, I keenly wanted to keep a place for individual participants as characters within the narrative. For this reason, they have all been given pseudonyms rather than participant codes.

### 3.3 Practical application of the research methods.

This section of the Methodology chapter involves a significant shift in tone. We now move from a theoretical methodological engagement to more of a practical articulation of how the research took place. It begins with phase one, designed to understand the socially produced context of the places involved in the study, against which the experiences of young people's place attachments would be examined. The second phase comprises the photo-elicitation research, which has been discussed significantly conceptually and theoretically already. In this section of the chapter though, it is explained as more of a step-by-step process of what took place.

#### 3.3.1 Phase one – understanding the socially produced place (the *bol de contexte*)

I devised a wide-ranging course of inquiry that works to build a deep understanding of both towns in the study, to establish the *bol de contexte*. This involved semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and field observations, supported by a desktop review which examined local government policy, publicly available statistical data and community indicators, news media and social media. These elements of this phase of research are all explained further detail below. This phase of research provides a detailed understanding of each town as the socially-produced space in which the lived experience of the young person and their attachment to place is contextualised.

##### *Desktop review*

###### **Statistical data**

A range of existing statistical data was researched in order to provide an understanding of key demographic and socioeconomic features of Castlemaine and Maryborough.

Predominantly this consisted of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS), including Census data along with the ABS' Socio Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA). When researching ABS data, I have used the geographic distinction Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2)

which is “designed to reflect functional areas” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a), meaning that an SA2 might be a bit larger than the town itself, but is intended to reflect an “area from which people come to access services at a centre”. The aim of the SA2 is to “represent a community that interacts together socially and economically, hence it is the most appropriate geographical level for investigation” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a). The SA2 figures for each case study area are compared with figures for the ABS Remoteness Area (RA) Inner Regional Victoria within which each of the localities sit (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a). ABS data provides insight to a range of socioeconomic phenomena, such as employment, educational attainment, housing and rental stress, rates of single parent families, age and gender profiles, cultural and linguistic diversity, volunteering rates and household income among others. A range of other data was sourced including results from the VicHealth indicators survey, which provides profiles of local government areas using key measures related to physical and mental wellbeing, and Victorian Crime Statistics Agency, which provides rates of crime by type by local government area.

The approach taken with using statistics consisted of an initial broad investigation making comparisons between Castlemaine and Maryborough or their respective local government areas and the broader Victorian averages. This aimed to identify phenomena that appeared to be relatively more significant in a certain area, with the intent that this would help to reveal particular and shared socioeconomic challenges apparent in either of the towns.

### **Social media**

Both towns have a community-based Facebook group, with large followings. These were used not only for attempting to recruit photo-elicitation participants, but also for observing issues and challenges present in the community as well as community sentiment, and the coherence and/or disjointedness of community sentiment. Castlemaine’s group “Castlemania” has a significantly larger membership base, and during the course of the

research was far more active, than Maryborough's "What's On Maryborough" group. Throughout the course of the research, the Castlemania Facebook group was often home to high tensions and heated discussions between group members. Caution was taken in monitoring these Facebook pages being representative, as heated discussions were often between a particular set of very active members. However, the overall monitoring of the activity on the page, provided indications of where significant community tensions existed, which were then fleshed out in the stakeholder interviews, and in some cases also in the photo-elicitation research. While comments on these Facebook pages are in the public domain, they have not been placed there by individuals with the knowledge that they might be used in research. As such I have been very cautious and sensitive in citing individual comments.

#### Grey literature – government plans, policies, reports and strategies

A targeted search and review of government reports and policy related to young people, economic development, community development, and tourism. This helped to identify material relevant to understanding the governance and socially-produced nature of Castlemaine and Maryborough.

#### News media

News media was searched and monitored in order to identify key socioeconomic and community issues in Castlemaine and Maryborough. This also provided a means of sometimes gaining an insight into the external perception of the town.

#### *Field observation*

At least five visits to both Castlemaine and Maryborough occurred over the course of 2016, with the aim of simply being in the space and perceiving what was there and what wasn't. This involved taking a wide range of phenomena into consideration, including the layout of the town, what services, facilities and amenities were available, what kind of evidence of programming and events was perceptible, where there appeared to be young people and

where there did not. This also looked at what types of businesses and shop fronts were present, what were the kinds of employment apparent. Field explorations involved considering the spatial dynamics and aesthetics of the town. I was particularly interested to assess the presence of heritage assets – as both Castlemaine and Maryborough emerged out of the gold rush, I was interested to see, through heritage fabric such as architecture and public spaces how the places might have evolved differently following the booming growth and wealth of the gold rush. The field observations were recorded through field notes and photographic documentation.

### *Stakeholder interviews*

A schedule of interviews with stakeholders was devised through online research examining organisational structures in local government and looking at other community-based organisations. Executive or senior staff members at relevant organisations were contacted asked to provide permission to interview a range of staff members on the topic of understanding the social and economic dynamic in each town, in some cases they also provided further suggestions for individuals to interview. The stakeholders concerned were predominantly local government staff with roles in youth engagement, community development, arts and culture, neighbourhood renewal and economic development. Other non-government stakeholders included community cultural development workers. Stakeholder interviews involved a structured list of questions, which all interviewees were asked, as listed below:

- How would you describe the community here?
- What are the key challenges facing people living here?
- What are the key challenges particular to young people here?
- How does having an ageing population affect the social and economic dynamic here?
- What sort of things do you see young people doing here with their leisure time?

Following these generic questions, participants were asked more specific questions related to their understanding of the town based on their role in their organisation. The audio recordings of these interviews were fully transcribed and analysed thematically to establish the key issues and challenges for young people in either town, as well as to contribute to the broader socioeconomic understanding of place.

### 3.3.2 Phase two – auto-driven photo-elicitation

The plan for the recruitment of photo-elicitation participants for this study in both Maryborough and Castlemaine included recruitment through high schools, TAFE, community noticeboards and place-based social media web pages. Some organisations were more open and willing to support the participant recruitment process than others. This largely impacted the recruitment outcomes, which resulted in participants in each town being recruited differently. In Maryborough the majority of participants (nine) were recruited after I presented about the research to a VCAL class at TAFE. Three further participants signed up to the study after I presented to a senior years assembly at a local high school. In both cases, the institution requested to act as my proxy in all communications with the participants. This meant the school and TAFE both negotiated the return of participants' consent forms and cameras and coordinated the interview time and space on my behalf. In Castlemaine, after repeated attempts to engage with the local high school were unsuccessful, I presented to a group of VCAL students at the local TAFE and recruited five participants, out of which two completed the study. The remaining ten participants in Castlemaine were recruited through the Castlemania Facebook group. A detailed account of recruitment and participation is given in the table overleaf.

Table 1

*Participant recruitment*

Place	Initial participants			Returned cameras			Final participants (attended interview)			
	FB	HS	Tafe	FB	HS	Tafe	FB	HS	Tafe	Total
<b>Recruited through</b>										
<b>Maryborough</b>	1	7	10	0	5	9	0	3	8	11
<b>Castlemaine</b>	14	0	5	11	0	3	10	0	2	12

Once individual participants agreed to take part, they were given a disposable camera along with a briefing document that listed some of the types of things each participant might take photographs of, as listed in the left column of Table 2.

The single-page briefing document also suggested that they might take photographs of other things as well – including spaces, places, events or activities that they like or dislike, but may not even know why. Offering this freedom allowed the participants to have a spontaneous response to the photo-taking and to depict aspects of their hometowns that they valued, without having to be analytical in their response. The camera had 27 exposures, and participants were informed that they could choose to just take a few photographs, or they could use the entire film.

Once the film cameras were processed, in-depth one-on-one interviews were held with each participant. The participants were assigned individual codes and their digitised photographs were coded and numbered accordingly then printed. In the interview, participants were presented with their photographs spread out over a desk or table. When referring to each photograph, participants were encouraged to refer its number – so that during analysis, cross-referencing could be easily be done between the transcripts and photographs.

The interviews were semi-structured with selected questions that were asked to all participants to gain an understanding of their age, home life and general experiences in their hometowns. These questions asked to each photo-elicitation participant allowed for some

comparison and cross-referencing between individuals and provided a base level understanding of each individual from which to draw deeper analysis of their photographs and the wider interview. These questions are listed in the table below.

Table 2

*Photographic brief and interview questions to understand place attachment*

Place attachment <i>an individual's emotional bond with a place that has both social and physical dimensions</i>	
Photographic brief	Interview questions
What is the first place you take someone who is visiting and has never been to your town before?	How old are you? Have you lived here all your life?
What part of your town/region would you take with you if you had to leave?	Can you describe a little about your home life – like, are you living with family?
What do you feel proud of about your town?	How do you spend your time at the moment? Do you live in town or out of town?
What is the coolest or least cool thing about your town?	How do you get into or around town?
What is a place where you feel completely welcome or unwelcome? Are there places that you go to when you need to feel inspired?	Do you like living in [name of town]? Are there things that you feel are good about living in a small town as opposed to a big town or a city? What about anything that you think is bad about living in a small town as opposed to a big town or a city? If you had to leave here and not return, what would you choose to take with you – aside from your home and family?
Envisioned future locational choices	
[If in school] What do you plan to do after school?	
Do you imagine that you will live here for a long time – even if you would like to travel/work/study somewhere else before returning to live here?	



This initial part of the interview was followed by an open-ended discussion about the photographs in which participants were asked to explain the content of each photograph and their reasons for taking them. The discussion around the photographs also often created openings for talking in more detail about the participant's life and experience in their hometown. For instance, about social activities and night-life (topics which rarely appeared in the photographs).

### 3.3.3 Data

A total of 31 participants across both locations, 14 in Maryborough and 17 in Castlemaine, signed consent forms and took cameras. Of these, 27 returned their cameras for processing and 23 completed their research participation by attending their photo-elicitation interview (11 in Maryborough and 12 in Castlemaine). In the case that a participant had returned their cameras for processing but did not turn up to their interview, their photographic data was dismissed, as this was taken to be a withdrawal of consent.

Eleven interviews were conducted with stakeholders, each lasting between three-quarters of-an-hour and one hour. There were 23 interviews with young photo-elicitation participants, the shortest of which was 21 minutes and the longest, an hour-and-a-quarter – with the average being about 40 minutes. The photo-elicitation participants took between four and twenty-seven photographs each. Participants took 169 photographs in Maryborough and 226 photographs in Castlemaine. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, with some language adjustments made in the editing process to aid in readability. Adjustments include removing excess exclamations such as “um” and “ah”, as well as removing false starts to sentences or repetitions of words. The transcripts include some tonal descriptions in square brackets, such as [laughs], or [questioning tone] to convey qualitative detail.

### 3.3.4 Analysis

The mode of analysis adopted for examining qualitative data for this thesis is “open coding”. This was selected for its coherence with an ethnographic approach which privileges the emergence of stories from data in a fluid manner. As Corbin and Strauss (2012) write, open coding is used by analysts who “want to open up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them” (p. 160). The data generated through this research consists of three data sets – interviews with stakeholders, interviews with young people, and photographs taken by young people.

The first process of open coding took place with the stakeholder interviews, which were completed prior to the photo-elicitation fieldwork, and in some ways informed the open-ended questions in the photo-elicitation interviews. Themes that were identified during a close reading of the interview transcript, were noted in the margins so a further reading could bring together coherent and divergent themes across the interview dataset.

The initial part of analysing the photo-elicitation data involved a thematic assessment of the photographic dataset into particular places such as “Maryborough Railway Station”, “Golden Point Reservoir” or “Princes Park” as well as types of places, such as “domestic space”, “café”, “sports ground”, “pub” or “bush” to name a few. Thematic designations of activities were also used, such as “walking”, “biking”, “street art”, “visual art”, and “watching live music”. A series of readings of the interview data then provided a gradual layering of analysis through more conceptual thematic topics such as “community surveillance”, “social capital” or “mobility”, which are themes that were enriched through recursive reasoning and engagement with existing theoretical and conceptual frameworks. An open approach to data analysis, as exemplified through open coding, cohered well with the recursive reasoning approach to ethnographic research.

### 3.4 Ethical considerations

Given that the research deals directly with human participants, approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) was sought and granted. Informed consent was requested and given by all who participated. In the case of participants under the age of eighteen, parental consent was granted, along with the assent of the participant. One of the key ethical considerations in executing the methods, was the likelihood that participants may take photographs of identifiable people, without their knowledge or consent being given. To get around this, I ensured that *any photographs containing identifiable faces would be used only in thesis examination, and removed or censored in the final printing of the thesis, as well as any publications or presentations arising from the research*. Photo-elicitation participants were informed that they would be made anonymous in the research, but that their photographs and interview content may mean that people who know them could identify them.

The ethics approval letter is presented in the front matter of this thesis, and further documentation such as informed consent forms, Plain Language Information Statements appear in Appendix C.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodology designed to carry out the research to understand the ways in which the cultural features of place that affect young people's sense of place attachment in small country towns. Aligned with a social constructionist epistemology a qualitative ethnographic approach has been adopted to reveal a multiplicity of experiences. The auto-driven photo-elicitation method in which participants are seen as collaborators in the research was selected not only to provide a rich data source to complement interviews (Harper, 2012), but because it is regarded as empowering for research participants (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Stedman *et al.*, 2014; Van Auken *et al.*, 2010). The

spatializing culture theoretical framework as presented by Low (2016) provides some structure to the lenses of the social production of place and the social construction of space. This theoretical framework that enables and promotes recursive reasoning and can help to avoid “intellectual domestication” (Thomas, 2011, p. 7). In other words, the spatializing culture framework will allow the narrative to be developed through dialogue between myself as researcher / author, the data, and existing theories regarding young people, place and space. The chapter has examined reflexive positioning and authorship which is a vital component of contemporary critical ethnography (Soyini, 2005). Finally, this chapter has outlined in pragmatic detail how the research was carried out. The following chapter now examines the *bol de contexte* of Castlemaine and Maryborough. This provides a solid understanding of the socially produced nature of the places which act as the context for young people’s experience of daily life in these small towns.

## Chapter 4. The *bols de contexte* of Castlemaine and Maryborough

### 4.1 Introduction

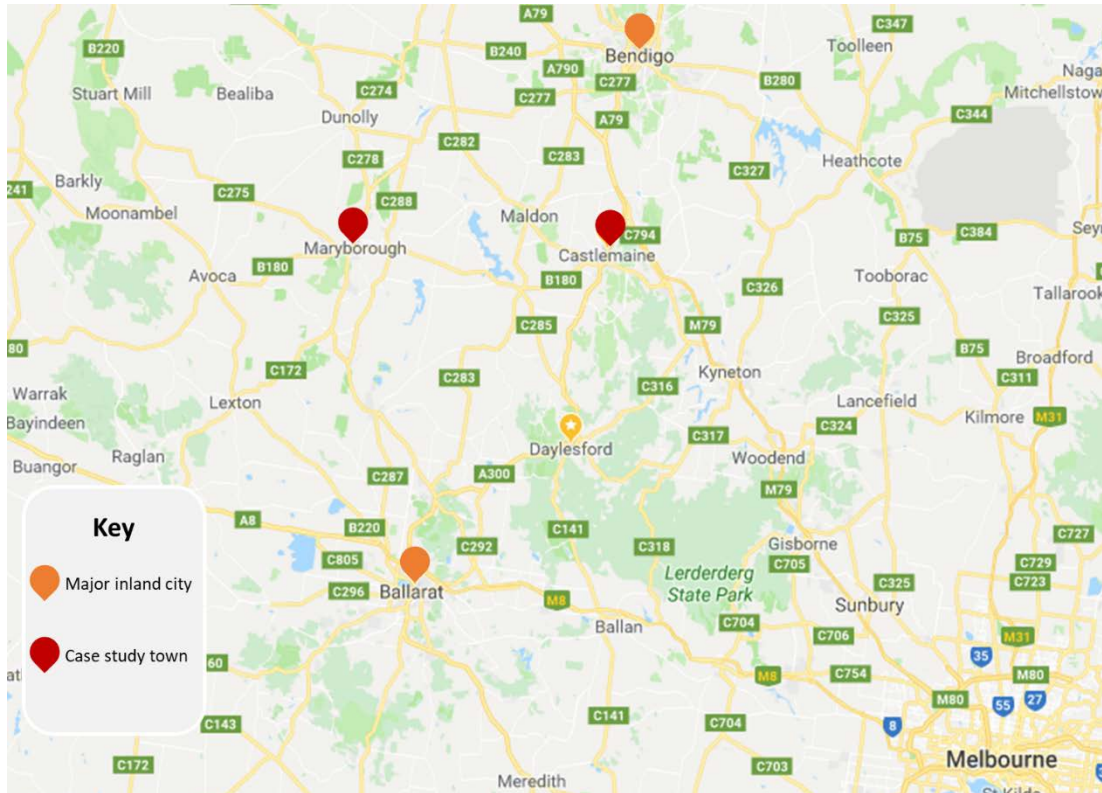


Figure 6 Map showing case study towns

Source: Author, adapted from Google Maps (2017).

For this PhD research I have selected two central Victorian goldfields towns that are roughly comparable in size and distance to a capital city. A map showing the towns in relation to the state's capital city of Melbourne and the provincial cities of Ballarat and Bendigo is pictured in the figure above. Castlemaine and Maryborough are both within a two-hour drive of Melbourne, are rich in heritage assets and are situated on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal people. Each town has a population of around 8,000 to 10,500 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b). Whilst similar in some ways, the towns also have very diverse social and economic scenarios, and they were selected for this reason. At a very surface level, the towns could be considered thus: Maryborough is the struggling rural town with rife long-term socioeconomic disadvantage and Castlemaine is the gentrifying tree-

changer town attracting creative classes, seemingly especially from inner-northern Melbourne. However, these are of course very superficial descriptions which do not do any justice to some of the more complex, and at times surprising, factors at play in affecting the vibrancy and nature of each of these towns.

This chapter provides a deeper picture of social and economic factors in each case study town and builds an understanding of their social, environmental and economic contexts generally, but especially as they relate to young residents. The content for this chapter is built from desktop research, examining factors related to the demography, economy, environment and geography of including statistical data, government reports, news media and community social media. These bottom-line socioeconomic indicators are then built upon with analysis of interviews held with key stakeholders and community practitioners undertaken in the course of this research. This group of interviews was held largely with local government employees and other community development practitioners. These interviews provide a first-hand qualitative data that is not necessarily available in the quantitative data, and in some cases provides more contextual, experiential depth to the desktop research. In particular these interviews highlight some of the lived drivers and issues at play affecting the lives of young people in these towns, as well as challenges faced by the community as a whole. The stakeholders interviewed are listed in the table below.

Table 3

*Stakeholders interviewed*

<b>Castlemaine</b>	
Role	Organisation
Youth Development Officer	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Heritage Officer	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Economic Development Officer	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Cultural Development Officer	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Manager	Castlemaine Community House
<b>Maryborough</b>	
Role	Organisation
Place Manager, Go Goldfields	Central Goldfields Shire Council
Events Officer	Central Goldfields Shire Council
Youth Council Coordinator	Central Goldfields Shire Council
Arts Officer	Central Goldfields Shire Council
Youth Officer	Central Goldfields Shire Council
VCAL TAFE teacher	Federation College

Due to the interviews being specific to the nature and content of the roles of the stakeholders interviewed, anonymity could not be assured. This was covered by the following excerpt in the Plain Language Information Statement (PLIS), approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC):

*As this phase of interviews will relate to your role in local government or a community organisation, it will be necessary to include a description of your role in the research outcomes. As such, it will not be possible to maintain anonymity. However, you will be given the choice to be referred to either by your name and position of employment, or just by your position of employment in the research outputs.*

Four main themes were discussed in each interview in specific relation to the town concerned. These were, the nature of the community, key challenges for the community, key challenges for young people in the community, and leisure activities for young people. This chapter employs a range of types of evidence to explore the *bol de contexte* of each case study town including demographic data, government reports, geographic features, news media, field observations, social media and qualitative interviews. However, rather than basing the chapter structure on a comparison of types of evidence or data, the chapter is structured by place – examining first Maryborough and then Castlemaine. Within the examination of each place there are cases in which data is presented comparatively. But rather than having a separate section that presents a comparative analysis of the two towns, the comparative data is presented based on place, and is driven the particular conundrums or challenges that become apparent for young people in each town.

## 4.2 Maryborough

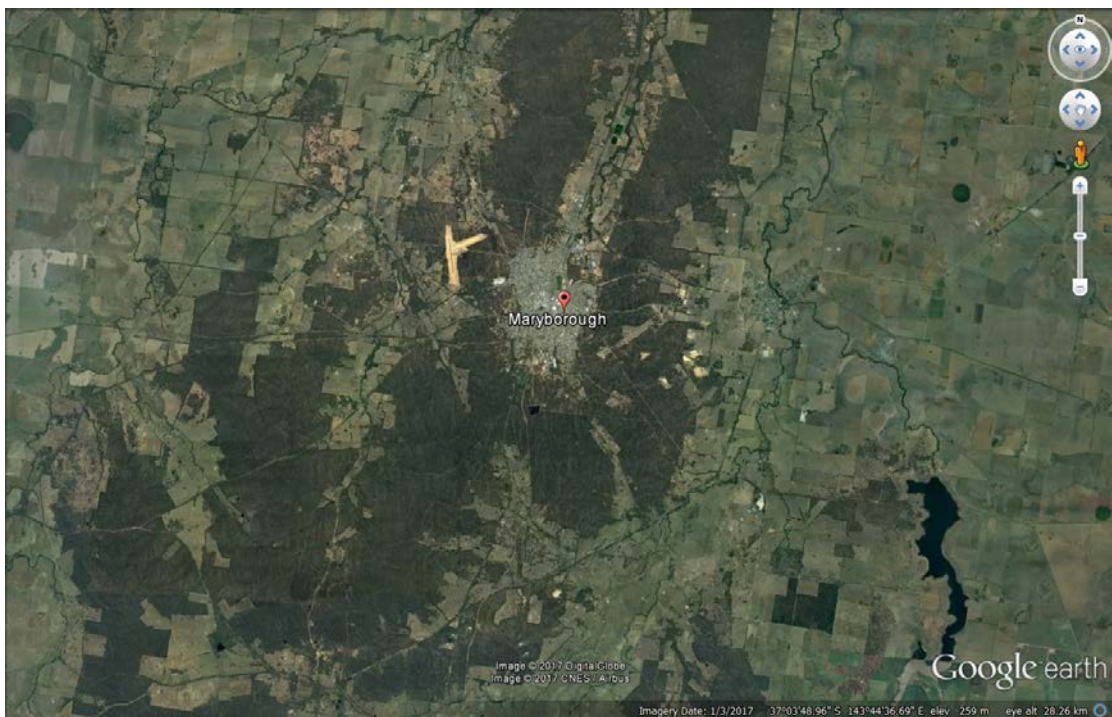


Figure 7 Satellite image showing Maryborough's geography within a tract of bushland

Source: adapted from Google Earth (2017).



Maryborough, situated in Central Goldfields Shire Council (CGSC) Local Government Area (LGA), is located 170km North West of Melbourne, and about 70km to each of Victoria's major regional cities of Ballarat and Bendigo. In recent years the population of the town has been growing steadily but not rapidly, with the population increasing from 7,163 to 7,953 during the 15 years from 2001 to 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011d, 2016d).

As evidenced by the satellite image in the figure above, the town is enveloped within a tract of bushlands, which consists of state and regional parks, conservation reserves and privately owned land. The contours of the landscape are subtle, with gently rolling hills. Field observations note that the bushlands generally consist of sparse native vegetation, which has re-grown since the area was stripped of most of its timber for use in the deep lead gold mines (see also, Redmond, 2015). While the gold rush has officially ended, the town and surrounding areas still host a fair number of gold prospectors, some of them full-time, making a living from fossicking through the remnants of previous diggings (Johnston, 2017). Maryborough and surrounds have significant built heritage fabric and parkland amenity, which attest to its wealthy gold rush origins. The most notable heritage site is the iconic Maryborough Railway Station, with numerous other gold era heritage sites including churches, hotels and banks, as well as mining infrastructure and remnants. Despite this wealth of built cultural heritage assets, there is little associated tourism infrastructure. The central town shopping district contains a mixture of heritage buildings and newer-commercial developments. This is described here in an extract from a field note:

*There are some amazing heritage buildings along the main street especially, but also a lot that have been either painted over in the colour of their franchise, or the upper frontages re-clad in iron. Surprisingly, given the socioeconomic indicators, there don't seem to be many empty shop fronts – at least not on the main street, there are a few down a couple of the side streets. The cinema is closed. (Parkin, Field note, February 2016)*

Whilst the town's prime built heritage feature is the somewhat out-of-place grandiose railway station, the operations of the passenger railway was impacted by the Kennett State Government's cuts to the state's transport services in 1993 (Allsop, 2007, p. 6). No passenger trains ran through the town until services were reinstated by the Brumby Government, in 2010. Now there are twelve rail services per week in each direction between Melbourne and Maryborough via Ballarat. Four daily bus services connect Maryborough with Bendigo.

Out of both case study towns examined in this research, Maryborough serves the largest rural catchment. While Castlemaine is within a 40-minute drive to the major inland city of Bendigo, from Maryborough it takes an hour to drive to either Ballarat or Bendigo. Its geographical position means that Maryborough sits as the largest town within a significant radius to the north and west of the town. This large rural catchment is reflected in the relatively high number of supermarkets, chain stores, rural supply and hardware stores as well as other services such as schools, medical facilities as well as social services agencies such as Centrelink. This extent of retail and other services is not present in Castlemaine. The level of retail development is also captured in the field observation below:

*Highly observable in comparison to Castlemaine is the location here of a lot of major retail franchises along with, in pockets, the associated wide laid out parking lots. From one vantage point a little way from the main street I can see a Woolworths, Aldi, Kmart, and a huge hardware and rural supplies store. As I walk around town I note a number of major franchises, including McDonalds, KFC, Subway, Toyworld, Target, and Priceline. There also are a lot of other smaller owner-operated retail shops with gifts, craft supplies, clothes as well as food. (Parkin, Field note, 2016).*

Following the gold rush, Maryborough's economy was supported by a manufacturing base, largely prompted by the development of the Maryborough Knitting Mills, which remained

successful for over fifty years before its closure in the 1980s (Central Goldfields Shire Council, 2013, p. 8). During the 1980s and 1990s a number of other factories closed resulting in further job losses for the town (Central Goldfields Shire Council, 2013, p. 8). Since that time, unemployment rates have been consistently high. For instance, 13% of the workforce estimated to be unemployed in 2010 (compared with state average at that time of 5.5%) and 11.4% in 2016 (CGSC, Central Goldfields Shire Council, 2013, p. 53; Department of Employment, 2016). Maryborough is home to severe levels of socioeconomic disadvantage. The *Dropping Off the Edge* (DOTE) report (Vinson *et al.*, 2015) measures persistent communal disadvantage in Australia, ranking local areas by postcode according to disadvantage measured by unemployment, criminality, disability, education, child maltreatment, family violence and mental health. According to the 2015 DOTE report Maryborough has been in the 3% most disadvantaged towns in Victoria over the previous ten years (Vinson *et al.*, 2015, p. 70). DOTE ranks Maryborough as the 46<sup>th</sup> worst postcode (out of 667) in the state for young adults not engaged in employment or education (compared with 200<sup>th</sup> for Castlemaine).

The ABS SEIFA contains an Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) which is generated from a range of indicators including employment, and unemployment, occupation skill level, high and low income, home internet access, number of cars, among others. The IRSAD, is illustrated in the map overleaf showing Castlemaine for comparison. The IRSAD ranks the Maryborough SA2 area as the 12<sup>th</sup> most disadvantaged SA2 in Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b). The Victorian Government Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has reported that Maryborough has high rates of people living with low income, in single parent families or living with a disability as well as worryingly high rates of developmentally vulnerable children in their first year of school – 21% as opposed to 12% as the Loddon Mallee average (Pope, 2011b, p. 31). DPCD calculated that the LGA of CGSC ranked worst in the state for youth engagement with over

25% of 15 to 19-year-olds not engaged in either education or employment (Pope, 2011a, p. 24).

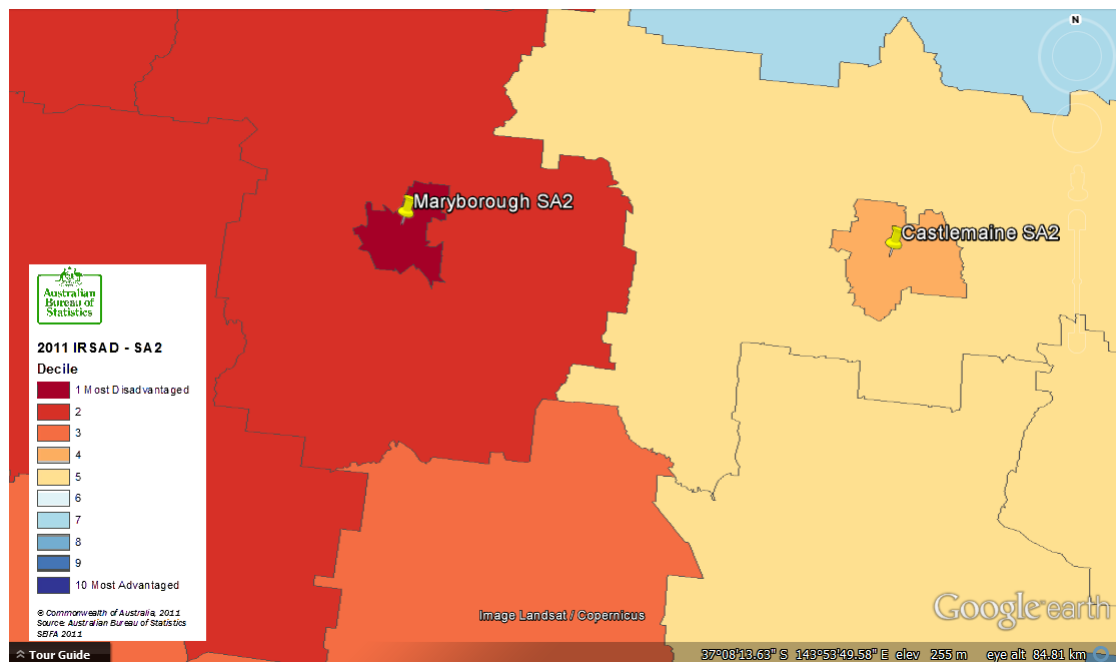
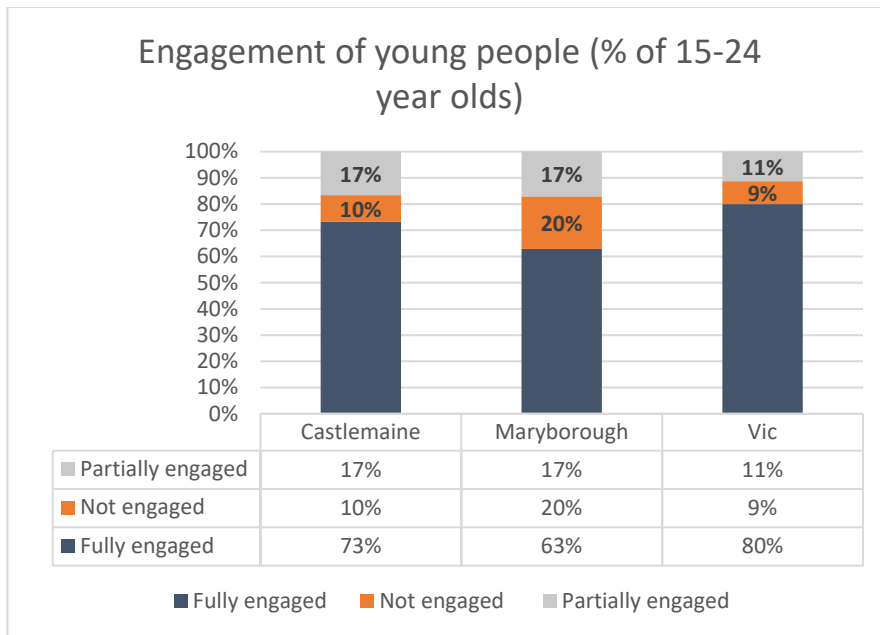


Figure 8 SEIFA IRSAD Maryborough and Castlemaine

Source: ABS, 2011 Census SEIFA KMZ

The graph below, compiled from 2016 ABS Census data illustrates the rate of young people who are fully, partially and not engaged in education and training in the Maryborough SA2 district, showing Castlemaine and Victoria for comparison. Only 63% of Maryborough's young people are fully engaged compared with 73% in Castlemaine and 80% in Victoria. The lack of young people's engagement also means the CGSC LGA is also home to significantly lower than Victorian average rates of educational attainment. For instance, the VicHealth wellbeing indicators report for the Shire states that 70.1% of the population over nineteen years have not completed Year 12 high school compared with 43.7% in Victoria (Vic Health, 2012, p. 6). The Shire is ranked as having the fourth-lowest Year 12 completion out of all LGAs in the state (Vic Health, 2012, p. 6). Furthermore, Central Goldfields Shire is ranked lowest in the state for adult residents having completed a higher education qualification (certificate, diploma or bachelor) (Vic Health, 2012, p. 6).



*Figure 9 Engagement of young people in employment or education*

Source ABS Census, Employment Education and Training, findings based on use of ABS TableBuilder data.

This low education attainment is further illustrated in the graph below, which indicates that while education attainment rates in Castlemaine are fairly consistent with State averages, Maryborough is significantly challenged. 17% of Maryborough (SA2) adult residents have not completed any education above Year Nine (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016d). The town has significantly higher-than-average rates of certificate-level education, which indicates training completed for low-skill and low-value trades, and just seven % of the adult population have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is under one-third of the state average (Department of Education and Training, 2016).

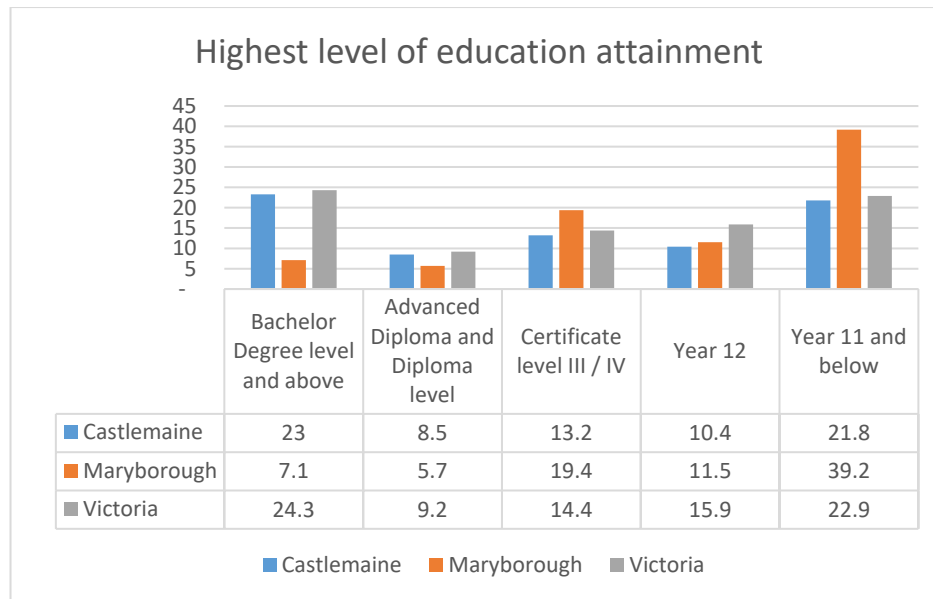


Figure 10 Highest level of education attainment Castlemaine

Source: ABS Census (2016b) SA2; Maryborough SA2 and Victoria State comparison.

The lack of engagement with education in Maryborough was also raised in the interviews held with stakeholders. For instance, in discussing the challenges facing the community in Maryborough, the Place Manager for Go Goldfields pointed to a low sense of value placed on education.

**Place Manager, Go Goldfields:** *It's that culture of [the parents saying] "we don't really want you to finish school because we don't want you to leave – because we need you at home lots".*

An interview with one of the local TAFE providers of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), reiterated this understanding in relaying a number of similar stories of parents who felt they needed the company of their children more than their children needed an education. In one instance regarding parent sentiment toward schools, she stated:

**VCAL Teacher:** *And I also see a lot of impact from the parents influencing the younger ones, the thirteen/fourteen year olds. They say "oh you don't have to put up with this", or "you don't have to listen to those people".*

Maryborough is apparently home to a fairly widespread negative sentiment towards education, educators and educational institutions. This sentiment illustrating an intergenerational disengagement from education was revealed repeatedly throughout the stakeholder interviews.

Recent times have seen the establishment of a number of chain department stores, supermarkets and fast food outlets. The Shire's *Workforce Development Strategy* (Central Goldfields Shire Council, 2013) has placed a strong emphasis on supporting retail, and working to reinvigorate and maintain a strong manufacturing sector. Hence retail and manufacturing are the strongest employing industries in the town now (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b). While the *Workforce Development Strategy* (Central Goldfields Shire Council, 2013) is attempting to address the region's consistently high unemployment rates, the focus retail and service sector jobs requiring low skills and often subject to high casualization and vulnerability. Therefore, the focus *Strategy* is unlikely to address the region's education attainment rates or indeed, its long term prosperity.

The importance of work to young people was also raised by stakeholders, who noted what they saw as a positive aspect of young people in Maryborough, that they appear to be extremely willing to work. However, while it was discussed as positive in one way it was also viewed in a negative light as detracting from sporting and community engagement as well as commitment to education.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the willingness of young people to work was raised in a stakeholder interview as common due to the absence of working parents.

**Youth Advisory Council Coordinator, CGSC:** *And I do know of cases – because I do deal with so many young people – of them having to support their families or support themselves once they hit fifteen.*

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<sup>2</sup> Stated in the following interviews - Place Manager, Go Goldfields; Youth Services Officer, Central Goldfields Shire Council; and Youth Council Officer, Central Goldfields Shire Council.

So, the willingness of young people in Maryborough to work may be more a case of financial imperative, than proactively bucking the trend of intergenerational unemployment.

In order to combat the social and economic challenges present in Maryborough and the surrounding Shire, in 2011 the State Government committed \$2.5 million in funding for a programme called Go Goldfields that consisted of a targeted effort to improve the health, wellbeing and education outcomes for young people from infants until late teens (Green, 2011). Go Goldfields continues to operate and receives both State and philanthropic funding. Whilst this program has been in place for several years now, some of the issues currently facing young people raised by stakeholders were very confronting. For instance issues around drug and alcohol abuse, self-harm, and mental health were all discussed, as well as the issue of youth homelessness. Homelessness rates are typically very difficult to quantify as, perhaps especially in rural and regional areas, a lot of homeless people fly under the radar of any statistical data collector. The VCAL teacher interviewed noted anecdotally that there are numbers of teenagers either couch-surfing or sleeping in people's sheds. She also stated:

**VCAL Teacher:** *I do know of kids that are sleeping in tents that are provided by community health. Because that's the only option that's left.*

Despite the demographic and anecdotal depiction of significant social and economic disadvantage in Maryborough, the town appears to be home to a level of stoicism. This is indicated in the interview response below:

**Place Manager, Go Goldfields:** *I think one of the biggest challenges is that they – they think they're OK; they think they're tracking fine. And ... what is OK in this community and what is the expectation in this community is lower than what is possible for these young people.*



This could be explained away as a form of resilience, indicating that the community is coping quite well. However, as demonstrated in the statistical indicators above, the town is clearly facing significant socioeconomic challenges. It is possible that this form of stoicism has emerged from a community that has become hardened to circumstance of long-term socioeconomic disadvantage. There also emerged almost a sense of discomfort for individuals in requesting and accessing support, whether it be for education, health, family or legal services. Here, two of the Council officers interviewed, discuss the hesitancy from young people in accessing support.

**CGSC Youth Council Coordinator:** *Yeah, it is difficult because they're reluctant to go to community health and ask for help [with housing] so that's the other side of it. And it's really, really, absolutely their last resort if they do. So, they'll couch surf for months before it is desperation-stations and then they'll connect. But normally that's got to be "can you come with me?" and you go "sure, off we go".*

**CGSC Youth Officer:** *If it's not someone that they know, then they won't go to the appointments. They'll say "oh nah, look I don't know them". And so there's a big trust basis.*

The first statement reiterates the sense of stoicism highlighted on the previous page. It is likely that there's a felt sense of coping with what others perceive as a particularly negative and vulnerable situation. Both of these statements outline the importance to young people in Maryborough of having someone familiar to them, in accessing any type of service that might help to improve their lives.

While Maryborough is obviously home to significant social and economic disadvantage, the interviews also help to build a picture of a place filled with people who are very loyal and community minded, indicating high levels of social capital.

**Go Goldfields Place Manager:** *They're very loyal to each other. Very loyal. And it's you know – it's like any rural community really. If there is an emergency, everyone pulls in together and just does it.*

**CGSC Youth Officer:** *A lot of the young people are actually community minded, and people don't realise just how community minded they are, until they are put into a situation where they have to help out with the community. And they sort of link in with each other and trust is a big thing that they work off. So if they trust you then they'll do anything with you.*

This community-mindedness and loyalty perceived by these community practitioners is not something that can be illustrated by statistical indicators alone. As outlined in this section, Maryborough is home to some severe disadvantage, however, it appears to be entrenched so that the town itself is actually home to low levels of socioeconomic diversity, and thus low levels of inequality, which possibly contributes to community solidarity.

A significant amount of research on out-migration of young people from rural and regional areas, as cited in the Literature Review of this thesis, claims that this phenomenon negatively impacts the vibrancy and economic sustainability of the town. However, interviews with stakeholders in Maryborough did not elicit this as a challenge. In fact, while Maryborough has a median age of 50, twelve years higher than the Victorian median age of 38 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b), the Place Manager for Go Goldfields suggests that the town has been economically benefited by this by means of attracting retirees.

**Place Manager, Go Goldfields:** *So ageing population – but also, what Maryborough has is retirement villages. So, economically, that means that the newly retired are often moving into the area – selling up wherever and being able to afford to just buy outright. I've come across that quite a number of times. So that in itself can be a strength. Providing service to them is where maybe the resources are needing to be*

*pitched... I gather that with an ageing population there is – the Highland Society and Bowls and all sorts – there’s plenty of recreation around the place.*

So rather than focusing on the challenges associated with youth out-migration, stakeholders associated with social planning and economic development are capitalising on the retiree growth market. However, subsequently, it appears that this might mean that young people are secondary in terms of provisioning and resourcing. While the town has significant social and economic challenges, this thesis aims to examine the lived experience of young people in the town and to identify and understand places of value there. The final topic discussed in the stakeholder interviews was youth leisure. I asked participants – “what do you see young people doing in Maryborough with their leisure time?” The Go Goldfields Place Manager discussed that she had repeatedly heard from community that there is a lack of activities for young people in the town.

**Go Goldfields Place Manager:** *Yeah, young people are saying there’s not enough to do here ... So there’s lots of challenges there.*

While sports activities were also discussed a number of times in answer to this question sport was also raised as an activity that is seen to have declining engagement.

**CGSC Youth Council Coordinator:** *So sport is such a huge outcome that we’ve found. But, again it sort of drops off by the time they get to be nineteen, into their twenties. And again we wonder if that’s work commitments, and personal – just having time to yourself ... But most of them will travel outside for the weekend ... and of course you’ve got that big group doing nothing. Which is quite concerning.*

Through the interviews it emerged, that perhaps young people aren’t much of a visual presence in the town. For instance, the CGSC Youth Officer reflected that social media and TV were the most popular pastimes for young people in Maryborough.

**CGSC Youth Officer:** *A lot of the kids when they want to have time out it literally is just social media, sitting on their bed watching movies, Netflix – that kind of thing. And just being around each other. So they don't actually go and do a lot of things now ... there's not a lot of things to do for youth, apart from the sporting activities.*

Finally, the CGSC Arts Officer expressed her frustration at the difficulties of engaging younger people through the Council sanctioned arts program. Most of the Council funding goes towards hosting exhibitions at the Fire Station Art Gallery, for whom the primary audience is women over 55 years.

**CGSC Arts Officer:** *[Engaging] Younger people; I don't know, I wish I did. We've tried. We've tried and tried and tried to engage with the younger students ... So, I don't know what we're doing wrong.*

The two graphs overleaf illustrate that the challenges described by the Arts Officer in the quote above are also observable in statistical data on community indicators. Whilst young people in Maryborough – along with comparison regions – are more likely to participate in arts or related activities than older people, their sense of opportunities to participate in arts and cultural activities is significantly lower. In Maryborough over 60% of people aged between 18 and 35 had participated in arts and related activities in the three months prior to being surveyed compared with 50% of people over 55 years. However, when it comes to perceived opportunities to participate in arts and cultural activities locally, just 39% of 18-34 year olds felt there were enough opportunities to participate locally, compared with over 80% of people over 55. It is important to note that these two data pieces, both sourced from Community Indicators Victoria (CIV) come from different surveys carried out at different times. However, the results are striking enough, especially when combined with the Arts

Officer's statement above, that there appears to be a significant gap in provision of creative activities for young people in Maryborough.

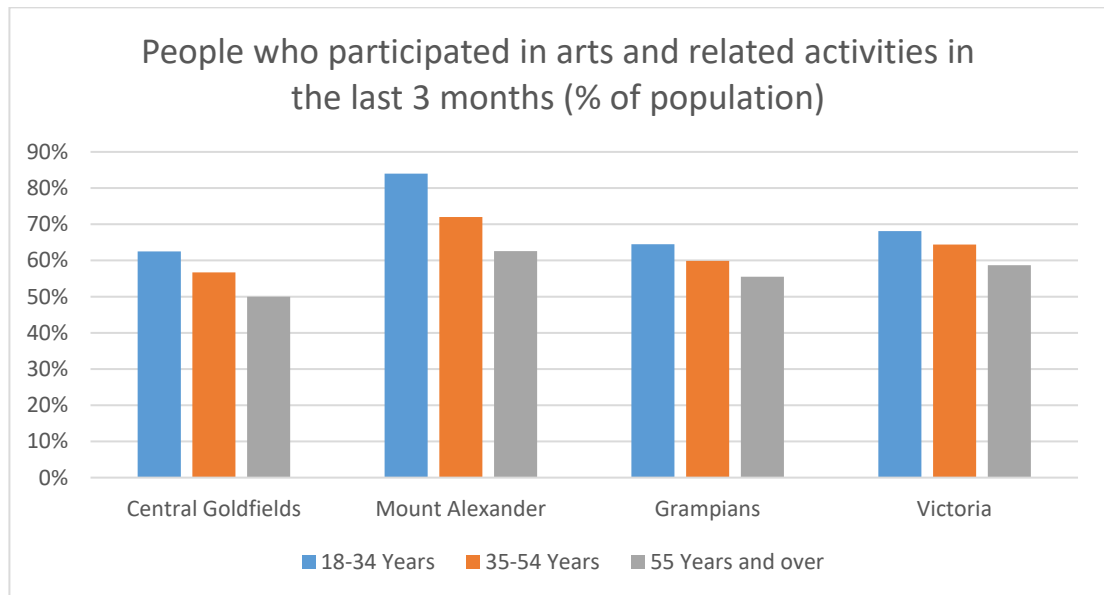


Figure 11 People who participated in arts activities in the last three months

Source: Community Indicators Victoria, adapted from 2011 VicHealth indicators survey results.

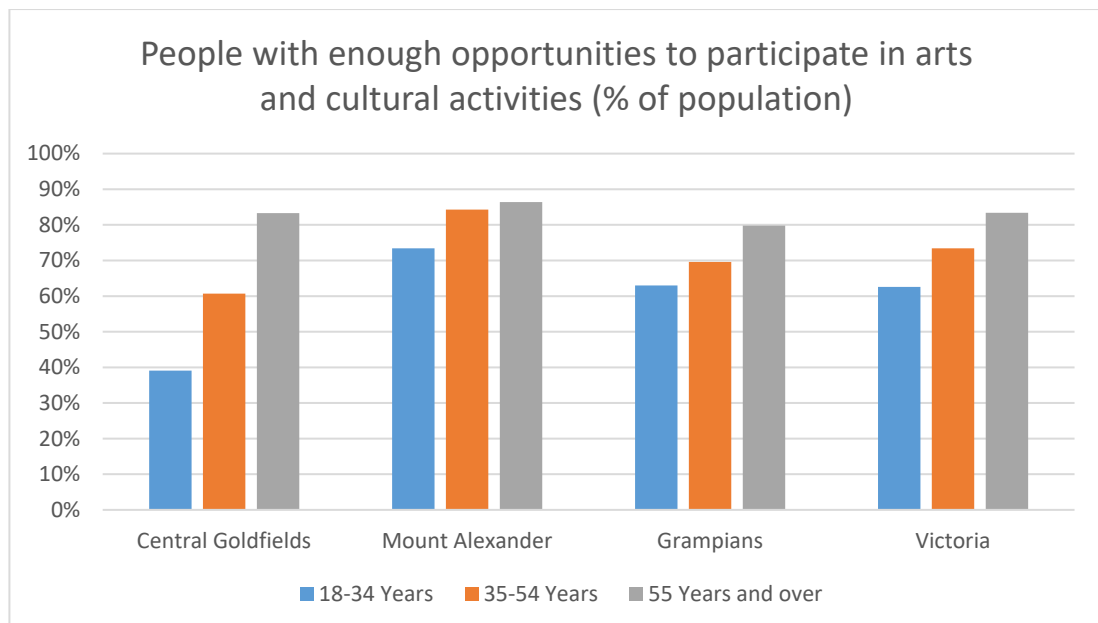


Figure 12 People with enough opportunities to participate in arts and cultural activities

Source: Community Indicators Victoria, adapted from 2007 CIV Community Wellbeing survey.

So young people in Maryborough are seen to either leave town in pursuit of leisure activities, or partake in insular activities such as social media and TV. On the whole it arose

the young people tend not to make up much of a visual presence in town, except for at sporting events.

Here I have presented a picture of the *bol de contexte* of Maryborough – including the social, historical, economic, geographical features that might come into play in young people's social construction of space and affect their relationship with their home town. The research has picked up on key issues that might affect young people's relationship with place.

Maryborough is home to entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage and high levels of disengagement from education at an early age and low educational attainment generally. An economic development policy focused around supporting and further developing a retail sector means low value, low skill jobs are available, but with little opportunity for career progression. There appears to be a mismatch in Maryborough between local community development and planning stakeholders, and the actual needs or experiences of young people. I will now move on to examine the *bol de contexte* of Castlemaine.

### 4.3 Castlemaine

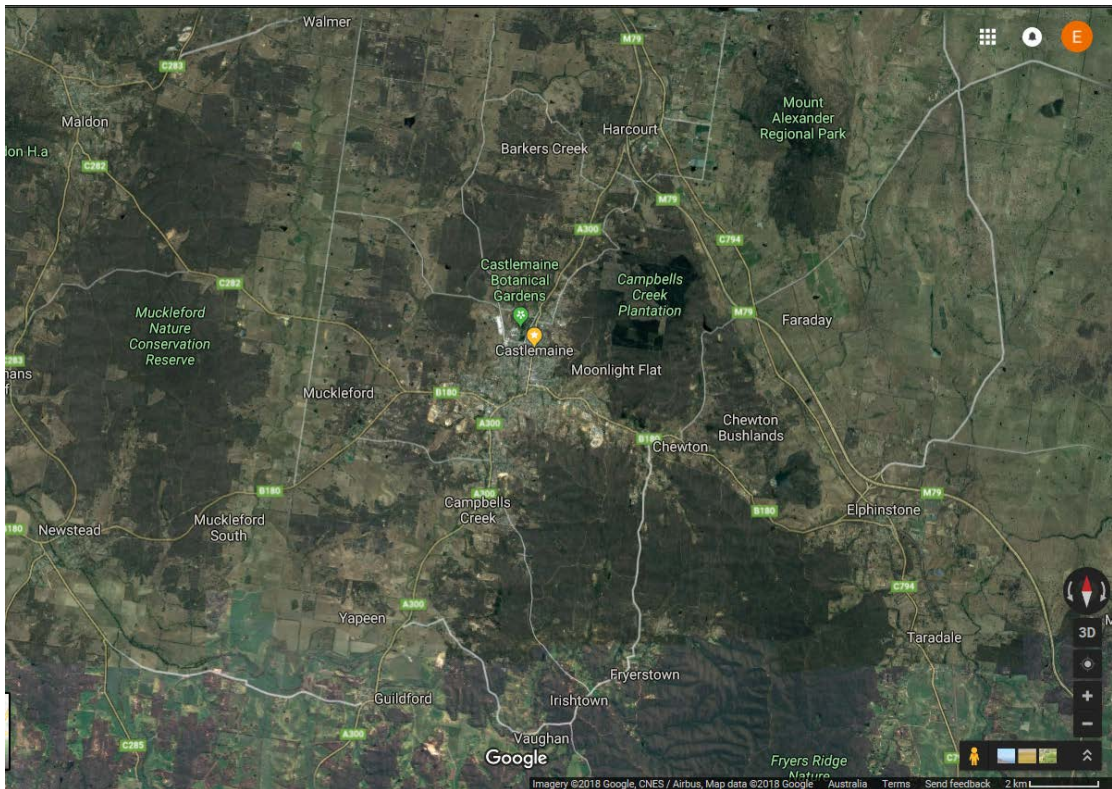


Figure 13 Castlemaine geography

Source: Google Maps

Castlemaine in Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) LGA sits on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people in an area of rolling hills an hour-and-a-half drive from Melbourne. The town is connected by train with regular services towards Melbourne and Bendigo. Following the discovery of gold in the area, it saw a rapid population boom with an influx of 25,000 people in the first year. During and after the gold rush a number of manufacturing businesses established themselves, producing both food and engineering goods. Some of these businesses such as KR Castlemaine (Don Smallgoods), Barnes Castlemaine Rock, Thompson's Foundry (now operated by US Flowserve), provide ongoing employment in the town to this day. The ongoing manufacturing industry has meant that the town has remained home to infrastructure and skills that now support niche creative

industries that have evolved in the town such as hot-rod restoration, decorative ironwork, and artisanal food production (Felix, 2014).

Castlemaine has an entrenched arts community, established by a wave of artists migrating to the town from other areas in the 1970s. Since this time the town has become known as socially progressive. At a surface level there seems to be strong social conscience in Castlemaine and a focus on supporting small business and slow economic growth. The town sports a great number of social enterprises, supported by at least three co-working spaces. The town projects a strong environmental sustainability awareness – made visible by things like solar bulk buy schemes and local food networks. There are also a number of creative and socially aware adaptive reuses of heritage buildings, most recently the Castlemaine Woollen Mill – which is in staged development as a creative industries precinct with artisanal food production, a brewery, a winery, coffee roastery, artist and designer studios and other small businesses.

The town's median weekly household income is well below the state average at \$968 per week compared with \$1419 state average, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b).

Castlemaine also ranks as significantly disadvantaged on the SEIFA IRSAD at the 32<sup>nd</sup> percentile (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b). However, the socially-conscious nature of the community is demonstrated by a number of demographic features including high rates of volunteerism, citizen engagement and charitable giving as detailed in the following. MASC has significantly higher than average rates of volunteering according to the VicHealth community indicators survey results from 2011, with over 47% of the adult population volunteering on average once per month, compared with the state average of 34% (Vic Health, 2012, p. 2). Rates of citizen engagement in the same survey were also noted as the highest in the state at 73.3% having reported partaking in some form of citizen engagement in the previous year, compared with the state average of 50.5% (Vic Health, 2012, p. 2). The National Australia Bank (2017) *Charitable Giving Report* notes that Castlemaine has the



highest rates of charitable giving as a proportion of income in the state, and second highest in the nation, with the town donating 0.36% of its income to charity (p. 2).

Over the last decade Castlemaine and surrounding areas have received significant in-migration of people from inner Melbourne seeking affordable housing and lifestyle changes. Almost 1,700 of Castlemaine's residents have moved to the town within the last five years. 1,200 of these have moved from elsewhere in Victoria (835 of which are from the metropolitan Melbourne area), 280 from interstate and 190 from overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016c). For a small, rural town this presents a significant change in the demographic where over one sixth of residents have lived there for five years or less. Many of these people would possibly fit well into Florida's (2002) description of the creative class. Whilst this in-migration may not be a huge number in terms of the proportion of population, it has had very observable effects on the town. In part this takes the form of considerable revitalization and gentrification, reflected by a range of cafés, bars, galleries and fashion and lifestyle retail stores. The town is referred to by some as "North Northcote" after its capacity to attract migrants from Melbourne's highly gentrified inner northern suburb of Northcote (Hudson, 2014). While unemployment rates in Castlemaine are slated to be lower than the state averages, the town has significantly higher-than-state-average rates of part-time workers – with 42% of the labour force working part-time compared with 31.4% of the state-wide labour force working part-time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b). These rates of part-time workers could be interpreted as involuntary underemployment. However, according to interviews held with Council officers, is more likely to reflect an active choice made by residents who have relocated to Castlemaine for lifestyle reasons, possibly downsizing from a home in Melbourne they may have less rent or mortgage to pay and can therefore live decently off a part-time income.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews, Heritage Officer, Mount Alexander Shire; Economic Development Officer, Mount Alexander Shire.

Castlemaine has a lower median age (47 years) than Maryborough (50 years), however, the median age of Castlemaine residents is still significantly older than the state average of 37 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b). As with Maryborough, stakeholders did not discuss the out migration of young people as have a particularly negative impact on the social and economic sustainability of the town. However, the MASC Cultural Development Officer notes that the Council has actively programmed in order to engage young people and create dialogue between age segments:

**Cultural Development Officer, MASC:** *Um, I would, I think it's another representation of growing diversity in this town... But when we look at our data and we look at our program, it's more for a growing older age group and we're kind of I guess we're probably conflicted in that some of the things that we try to do are to specifically try to challenge that segment of our community so we probably try to negate that ageing demographic by actually programming really against it... And that still creates dialogue with that [older] demographic, because it's not that comfortable, you know – some of the paste ups and some of the dialogue is highly political and highly critical of decision makers so that's been interesting.*

The street art program that the Cultural Development Officer refers to here arose in the photo-elicitation research, and is discussed in the following chapter as well as in Chapter 10.

The comparatively high rates of charitable giving outlined above are complemented by high rates of volunteering. Some stakeholders interviewed, saw this as one of the benefits of the migration that has occurred in the town. There is a perception that many tree-changers who have moved to the town are older and retired or semi-retired, and their motivations around relocating are around seeking a change of lifestyle and a deeper connection with community and therefore have time on their hands and a will to contribute. Here the Heritage Officer at the Council describes the types of tree-changing migrants that arrive in Castlemaine.

**MASC Heritage Officer:** *Women in their fifties who don't have enough super fund to keep funding them through to retirement. They cash up their one million dollar house in North Fitzroy, they buy a \$400,000 house here and suddenly they've got Super to keep them going. And we have an enormous number of those coming here ... They actually do a lot of volunteering work.*

The Youth Development Officer at MASC also discussed the ease with which volunteers can be obtained for projects around youth engagement. For instance after describing a youth mentoring, education and employment support program, she stated:

*And we have, we never really have a problem with recruiting volunteers. There's a lot of adults in town who are very willing to donate their time to programs like that.*

The sustainability of the change and growth that has been occurring in Castlemaine and surrounding small towns has been called into question for the impacts that it has on people who have grown up in the area. For instance, MASC Mayor, Cr Christine Henson, was quoted in a newspaper article on key election issues in Castlemaine, she stated: "Younger people and those on lower-incomes are being priced out – to a certain extent – by people coming from the city..." (Hinchliffe, 2016). The graph below illustrates that 10% of Castlemaine's rental tenants are experiencing rental stress. While this proportion is actually consistent with the State average, the rate at which median rental prices have increased in the five years between Censuses is higher in Castlemaine at 24% compared with the Victorian average of 14% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a, 2016b). The rate of change then is likely to have a greatest impact on the town's long term residents, especially those at the lower end of economic advantage.

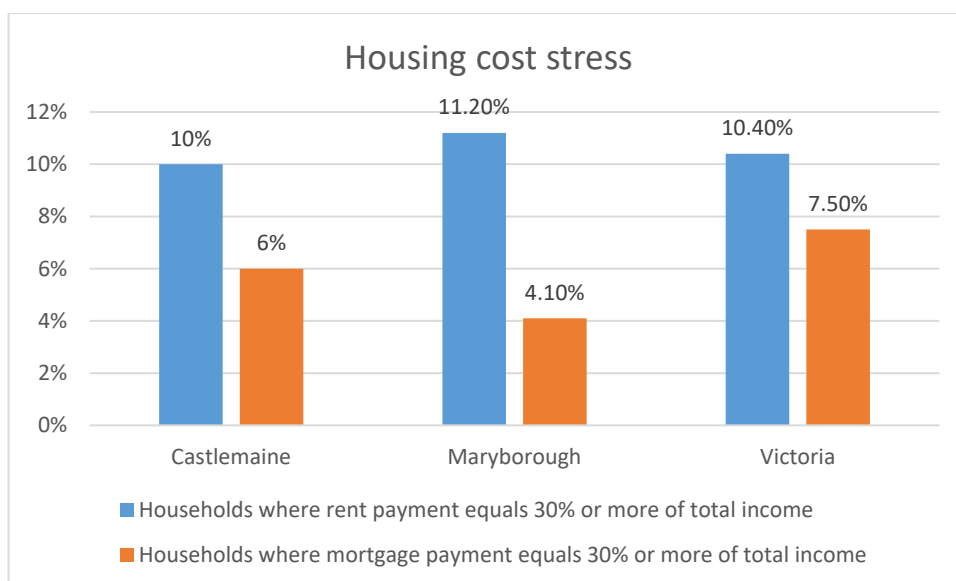


Figure 14 Housing cost stress.

Source ABS Census (2016), Castlemaine SA2, Daylesford SA2, Maryborough SA2 and Victoria State.

This points to an issue that arose repeatedly in stakeholder conversations around the nature of the community in Castlemaine – which illustrated a somewhat dichotomous community, consisting of two main visible cohorts with opposing value bases.

**Manager, Castlemaine Community House:** *So I think Castlemaine has changed from being a sleepy country town to a town that has quite a growing population of Melbourne people ... slightly alternative perhaps. And some of us will look at that and say that's great. But people that have lived here for a long time, and are perhaps more traditional, would struggle with that.*

This division as articulated in the quote above was repeatedly discussed as the difference between “old” and “new” Castlemaine. For instance, the Heritage Officer stated that whilst the newer demographic was very supportive about heritage, that the longer-term residents saw heritage as being about control and oppositional to progress.

**Heritage Officer, MASC:** *Their opinion is that heritage controls restrict development, restrict business; restrict their ability to make money and to make changes. So you've got a bit of a divided community.*

This was expanded on by discussing a fractious debate which took place in the community, over a planning application to set up a pokies (gambling) venue in town.

**Cultural Development Officer, MASC:** *So the legacy of those who supported it and those who didn't is sort of reflective of that – us and them, new and old sort of thing.*

Some of these divisive issues have played out on through social media – for instance on the community Facebook page Castlemania, which is a group with over 8,000 members. Heated debates occur frequently, especially around issues of change, for instance, propositions for a new supermarket – some fiercely defending the independent supermarket in town whilst others are outraged at the lack of choice and the desire for a more commercial option. The arrival of a new Domino's pizza outlet, which opened in late 2016, attracted ongoing and substantial debate for over a year, which became so heated that the site moderators chose to ban all further discussions of the topic.<sup>4</sup> Here the value difference is further articulated:

**Cultural Development Officer, MASC:** *People moved here because there's only one set of traffic lights, there's only one franchise, there's no Bunnings, so it's kind of exclusive in its twee-ness, in its ability to not change too much and retain its country charm.*

So newer residents are apparently more likely to defend what's already in Castlemaine because it is what attracted them to relocate in the first place, whereas long term residents are possibly more likely to want to see change. The value differences and conflicts at play between these facets of the community emerges in the photo-elicitation research with young people, discussed in-depth in Chapter 10.

The MASC's *Economic Development Strategy* (2013) regards the arts as a key factor in making a liveable place. Citing Richard Florida's *Cities and the Creative Class*, the LGA's

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<sup>4</sup> Administrator, post to Castlemania Facebook Group, 7 December 2016.

*Strategy* (Mount Alexander Shire Council, 2013) acknowledges the ways in which supporting arts and creative enterprise in the Shire can contribute to economic development by attracting further creative migrants and also by growing a tourism market. The *Strategy* (Mount Alexander Shire Council, 2013) states:

A healthy arts scene can indicate the presence of tolerance, diversity and openness to difference that appeals to other creative individuals. This, in turn, can encourage more creatively-inclined people to move to the Shire, who can bring a range of professional skills to the local economy, from architecture, to landscape gardening, IT development and sustainable agricultural production. 'Creative communities' are well-known for economic vibrancy brought about by their capacity to innovate, adapt to, or overcome challenges, and respond to opportunities. (p. 70)

Importantly, MASC (2013) also acknowledge that supporting the arts in regional economic development and planning initiatives, is not just about creating an attractive place for migrants, but is also about improving liveability and strengthening capacity from within (p. 71).

While the stakeholder research in Maryborough indicated that young people are under-catered for when it comes to recreation and leisure, this did not appear to be the sense in Castlemaine. Here, the Youth Development Officer describes the types of activities that young people engage in during their leisure time.

**Youth Development Officer, MASC:** *Secondary school aged young people – there is a real diverse range of activities that happen after school, so trying to arrange an evening with our young volunteers for example is a nightmare because there's so much going on in their lives, whether its sport, or art based, or extra tutoring, or work – part time work is a big one. So, it depends, there's a lot of sub-culture groups here that exist here in our Shire. We've got a big skate park and there's a group of*

*young people that hang out there. And there's a lot of sporting clubs and non-mainstream types of physical activity stuff that goes on – martial arts, dancing, hip hop.*

When asked about what were seen to be challenges for young people living in Castlemaine, the main issues that arose in stakeholder discussions were around lack of public transport, lack of reliable and fast internet access and lack of diverse options in extracurricular activities as well as lack of post-school education opportunities. It appears then, through this analysis that Castlemaine provides an interesting site through which to examine the role of creativity in contributing to young people's relationship with place.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

A number of issues emerged that this research might start to address. For instance, to what extent would the apparently dualistic nature of the community observable in Castlemaine impact upon young people's perceptions and experiences of place? Would the apparent "social dislocation" caused by a gentrifying creative class town be a reality for young people having grown up in Castlemaine? Would an obvious class discrepancy erode social capital and create resentment? While Coughlin (2004) has indicated that in places where people are socially and economically stratified – in terms of education, income and occupation – they will be more likely to have diminished social capital. So in Maryborough, where socioeconomic disadvantage is widespread, and there is less stratification than in Castlemaine, would we expect to see stronger social capital? Would this be experienced positively by young people? In addressing the principal research question – *in what ways do the cultural features of small towns affect young people's place attachment* – this thesis will also contribute in part to answering the more locally-specific questions articulated here. Before delving into the photo-elicitation research findings, the next chapter of this thesis

discusses the photo-elicitation research participants, introducing them as characters who the reader will get to know over the course of the remainder of the thesis.



## Chapter 5. Research participants

### 5.1 Introduction

The thesis has now established a significant understanding of each of the towns under investigation, against which the lived experience of young people will be explored. In this brief chapter I will present an understanding of the photo-elicitation participants in the study. This chapter is important for building an understanding of the dynamics of the cohort of participants from each town – including how the recruitment may have influenced the dynamics of who was involved. Factors that link and differentiate the research participants will be explored as they relate to the group from Maryborough and that from Castlemaine. Challenges particular to the methods and the participant groups are also identified. Finally, the participants are introduced as individual agents in the research, whose photos, voices and experiences are used to address the research questions. This consists of a one-paragraph summary of information about each individual. This understanding has been generated through the interview transcripts, and can be used to return to when reading subsequent chapters that discuss the qualitative data relating to an individual. An understanding of these individual photo-elicitation participants will help to bring depth to the presentation of the research findings in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

### 5.2 The means of recruitment

This study involves some comparative analysis between towns. However, the groups of participants recruited in each town are diverse and in no way constitute a representative sample of the population of young people in each place. As discussed in section 3.3.2, despite intentions, the recruitment involved differently in each town. In Maryborough eight nine of the participants were recruited to the study through the TAFE where they were studying senior years of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL – the applied equivalent to senior years of high school) and the remaining three participants were

recruited through one of the town's local high schools. In Castlemaine, on the other hand, there was considerable difficulty in attempting to recruit through the high school. Ten of the twelve participants for the case study town of Castlemaine, were recruited through the Facebook online community group, Castlemania and the remaining two through a local TAFE class of VCAL students. While a call out for participants was also placed on a Facebook page for Maryborough, it received little interest – with one responded who did not carry out full participation. The fact that so many of the young participants in Castlemaine came forward voluntarily after seeing a Facebook ad, indicates that the particular group of participants in Castlemaine consists of people who are relatively engaged and interested in their community. All participation in either location was entirely voluntary and there was no coercion or pressure to participate. However, where participants were recruited through a school or TAFE, it is highly likely that there is a more passive sense of participation because of the institutional environment in which the recruitment took place. Being recruited from outside of an institution also meant that there were more steps involved for the participants – from making initial contact, to arranging return of consent forms, addresses for cameras to be sent to, arranging the return of the cameras and arranging an interview time. Whereas, in the school and/or TAFE environment, the teachers and/or office staff assisted in facilitating that process. Furthermore, not only did the means of recruitment mean that the participants in Castlemaine may be more engaged as a cohort than that in Maryborough, the nature of the study – being a photo-based study seemed to attract young people in Castlemaine who were predisposed to artistic pursuits. This is reflected in the participant discussions, which generally indicate a strong predilection for creative forms of engagement.

These notes on the recruitment process and the type of people recruited are a vital reminder that the small samples for this research in Castlemaine and Maryborough are in no way representative of the broader town populations of young people. Rather, the photo-elicitation fieldwork provides significant qualitative data through which to investigate the

ways in which cultural features of place in Castlemaine and Maryborough affect the experience of young people and the relationship between young people and their home town. Out of the research emanates a “storied reality” (Madden, 2010) which includes both unique, individual experiences and relationships with place, as well as groupings of coherent storied realities, in which pictures of shared group experience and understandings begin to emerge (p. 6). Thus, the research involves the exploration of both individual experience, as well as group experience.

### 5.2.1 A learning curve

Maryborough was the first town where fieldwork was undertaken for this thesis. As such, this case study also presents a learning curve for me in terms of my knowledge and skills relating to qualitative fieldwork. I learnt a lot about interviewing over the course of this thesis. In *Doing Ethnography*, Madden (2010) discusses the importance of ensuring questions are open ended, an allowing for sufficient “conversational space” for participants to respond as well as not asking leading questions (pp. 70-71). While these principles informed my research methods, the implementation of it in practice took time to develop. Upon reflection, in Maryborough especially, I regret not asking certain questions, and sometimes not waiting long enough for respondents to form their own answers, or in some cases trying to analyse their responses on the spot rather than giving participants more space to speak and doing analysis later. Three of the participants in Maryborough were also exceptionally shy, so it was difficult to elicit more than two or three words at a time in response to my questions. This learning curve with interviewing demonstrates the benefit of designing the research programme to allow for follow-up interviews, which I would incorporate into any further research on this topic or with a similar methodological approach.

### *Limitations with the photographic method*

In both locations there was a range of manners in which the research participants approached the photographic task. Some really got into the nature of the project – actively attempting to photograph places of value to them and in direct response to the prompt sheet they were given. Others, perhaps in response to the novelty of using the disposable cameras, took all or most of their photographs in one spot. For instance, Mark in Maryborough took the whole film of photographs on the day he was given the camera at his TAFE. The result is a range of images from the interior of a classroom and an outdoor carpark. Greg in Maryborough, also took more than half of his photograph of seemingly random objects from inside his home. Meanwhile Jacob and Duncan in Castlemaine took an almost identical set of photographs. The interviews indicated that perhaps Duncan had actual intent and reason for choosing the photographs and Jacob might have followed along. Some participants were perhaps more naturally drawn to the photographic medium and perhaps had a keener, innate sense of aesthetics. However, regardless of how the participants approached the photographing exercise, the images provided a good base for discussion in interviews. At worst, the photographs helped to detract from the awkwardness of being interviewed, but in most cases the photographs provided a first-person insight into the life of the participant.

### **5.3 Research participants**

Of the eleven photo-elicitation participants in Maryborough, four were young men and seven young women. Here the participants are introduced in the order in which they were interviewed. This has been produced through summarising key factors arising from the fieldwork process. The introduction aims to provide a sense of the person as an agent or character in the study, what they are currently doing with their time and how they envision their future, what is the sentiment towards their hometown. I initially introduce the

Maryborough participants and then the participants from Castlemaine – as this was the order in which the photo-elicitation fieldwork was carried out.

### 5.3.1 Human research ethics reminder

As mentioned in the methodology presented in Chapter 3, the research takes place in small towns which cannot be anonymised due to the photographic nature of the study. In the consent forms and PLIS, participants were informed that while they would be given pseudonyms in the research outputs, because of the nature of the small town context, it is likely that their responses may be able to be identified by people who they are known to.

### 5.3.2 Maryborough participants

#### *Bobby, VCAL student*

Bobby is 18-years-old and loves living in Maryborough and imagines that he will live there for his whole life. He lives at home with his family and races greyhounds with his dad. He regularly walks around town to get places and has an open and aesthetic awareness of the place around him. He plays Australian Rules football with one of the two local teams. Of all the people interviewed in Maryborough, Bobby was the most aware of, and engaged with the spatial environment of his home town. He passionately defends Maryborough to people who badmouth it. After he finishes his final year of VCAL he hopes to continue greyhound racing and travel around Victoria before seeking some bricklaying work in Maryborough.

#### *Greg, VCAL student*

Greg is 18, studying his final year of VCAL and currently works at McPhersons – a longstanding Maryborough printing business. He has lived in Maryborough for five years after moving with his family from Mildura. He envisages that he will live in Maryborough in the future, depending on whether his family is still there. Greg is really shy and was appeared quite nervous during interviewing. When he finishes VCAL he would like to

become a mechanic. Greg teaches himself to play keyboard through online videos and makes paintings. These creative pursuits are very personal and private and he does not seek or expect to find creative engagement in his home town environment. Over half of Greg's twenty-four photographs were taken from inside his own home.

*Frances, VCAL student*

Frances is 18 and has lived in Maryborough her whole life. Her older siblings have moved out of home and Frances is the last child living at home with her mother. She has a mixed relationship with Maryborough and while she loves the closeness of the community, she also feels stifled by the lack of anonymity. She is currently finishing her VCAL at TAFE and seeking employment in aged care. She is frustrated that she will have to leave Maryborough to undertake studies to become a nurse, as she'd prefer to stay living at home with her family. She imagines that, providing she can find employment, she will move back to Maryborough after completing her studies. Frances loves exploring the bush behind her house with her dog and her best friend. She also loves singing, but only in the privacy of her own home.

*Mark, VCAL student*

Mark is 19 and is studying his final year VCAL at TAFE after being expelled from the local public high school in the final weeks of Year 12. Once he finishes his VCAL study he would like to seek training and work in vehicle mechanics. He has lived in Maryborough since he moved with his mother from an outer Melbourne suburb when his parents separated 13 years ago. He doesn't desire to stay in Maryborough, but imagines he might move to a larger regional mining town in Western Australia where his older sister is living. He expresses a bit of a cultural divide between himself and Maryborough as things that he values such as street art and live music, are rarely sanctioned or offered in his hometown.

*Megan, VCAL student*

Megan is 20 years old and is completing her VCAL. She lives with her mother and stepfather and has lived in Maryborough for around ten years. She doesn't like the town of Maryborough and much prefers to spend time out of town on her family's bush-block. She rarely seeks spatial engagement within the town space of Maryborough. For her, the town is too small and she dislikes knowing everyone and a lack of privacy. However, she doesn't think that she will leave Maryborough as long as her family stays there. During the interview, Megan was shy and introverted and appeared quite nervous, offering very brief responses to the interview questions.

*Jacki, VCAL student*

Jacki is almost 20 and lives at home in Dunolly with her mother and brother. She comes to Maryborough for her work at a beauty salon and studying her final year of VCAL at TAFE. She left the local high school due to being bullied, and has found that the TAFE has provided a better environment for her. After one of her brothers died when she was young, she feels a very strong connection to Dunolly and especially her family home because of the memories of her deceased brother associated with the place. However, regardless of this, Jacki appears to have a very strong attachment to Dunolly for the town itself, the close community, the history and especially the bush it is surrounded by. She really loves photography and envisages that she might study and work in beauty therapy, but have a photography job on the side.

*Tessa, VCAL student*

Tessa is 16 and studying VCAL at TAFE, she works a part-time job at a local supermarket and likes to work out at a local gym. Her job has meant that she has had to give up playing netball and Australian Rules football as her work conflicted with the training schedule. She lives at home with her mum and younger siblings. She is intent on studying beauty therapy and will have to move to Ballarat to undertake her course. However, she imagines that she

will return to live in Maryborough once she has completed her training. She likes the quietude of small town life, but also really appreciates big events that happen occasionally in the town that bring about a sense of activity and vibrancy.

*Karl, VCAL student*

Karl is 18 and finishing his VCAL at TAFE. He lives in town in Maryborough but much prefers rural life. He doesn't particularly like living in Maryborough as he finds it lacking in things to do. However, he sees himself living somewhere more remote in the future as he really appreciates natural and rural environments. His favourite activities are four-wheel-driving and shooting. He finds smallness of Maryborough frustrating in terms of gossip and the spreading and embellishing of rumours that often occurs. During the interview Karl was somewhat shy and provided very short one-sentence answers to questions.

*Nina, high school student*

Seventeen-year-old Nina attends a high school in Maryborough and lives with her parents and younger autistic brother on a farm just outside of town. She has suffered from depression and finds solace in the beauty of the rural environment around her. Nina is frustrated by the lack of anonymity and the speed with which rumours spread around her home town. She feels ambivalent about living in Maryborough, but she is not sure where else she would like to live as she admits, due to her brother's special needs, her family have not explored outside the region much. She likes theatre and singing and participates in a local youth group. After leaving school Nina hopes to move to Bendigo to study marine biology and creative writing.

*Sara, high school student*

Sara is 18 and finishing Year 12 at a high school in Maryborough. She lives in town with her parents and two older brothers and has three part-time jobs, which has impacted on her ability to participate in once-loved recreational activities like playing netball. She is working



hard to save up money so she can move to Melbourne to live and work for a while. She spends a lot of time with her close friends, some of whom live in neighbouring smaller towns of Clunes and Carisbrook. Sara likes living in Maryborough, and has enjoyed growing up there. However, she does find the closeness of the community to be a double-edged sword and gets frustrated by what she perceives as gossip and a tendency toward people being judgemental within the town.

*Lola, high school student*

Lola moved to Maryborough from Woodend with her mother when her parents separated a year ago. She is nearly 18 and finishing her final year of high school at a local school. She takes martial arts classes in town and she absolutely loves living in Maryborough. She is not sure what she will do after high school but has thought about careers as diverse as journalism, hairdressing and farming. Lola envisages that she will live in Maryborough for a long time, even if she has to leave to study, she imagines that she will move back. Lola hangs out regularly in public spaces around the town with her friends.

### 5. 3. 3 Castlemaine

*Isabelle, high school graduate*

Isabelle is 18-years-old and just finished her final year of high school. She lives in Castlemaine with her mother and brother, and has lived in town since the beginning of primary school. She has just picked up a casual job at a local smallgoods factory, and is actively engaged in town – sitting on the MASC’s Youth Advisory Council, and attending dance classes. Isabelle intends to study a double degree in law and science, commencing at a university in Bendigo before moving to Melbourne to complete her studies. She sees Melbourne as offering a better education option, but financial constraints are holding her back from making that move right away. Isabelle loves Castlemaine and, while she doesn’t

see herself spending her young adulthood there, she envisages returning to live in Castlemaine when she is older and planning to have children.

*Duncan, TAFE VCAL student*

Duncan has lived in Castlemaine with his mum and two brothers since he was six or seven. He lives about quarter-of-an-hour's walk away from the centre of Castlemaine and enjoys getting around on foot. Duncan really enjoys playing music and hopes that he might be able to work or study in music in some manner after he completes VCAL. He is quite critical of some of the cliques of people that he sees in Castlemaine, and feels there is a superficiality to the way people interact. While Duncan feels quite negative about Castlemaine as a place to live, he does appreciate the aesthetics of small town life, especially being able to walk to the bush, and being surrounded by more natural environments. He's unsure about whether he would want to stay in, or leave Castlemaine once he finishes school, he's attracted to more isolated places.

*Jacob, TAFE VCAL student*

Jacob has grown up in Castlemaine and lives just on a small rural property ten minutes out of town with his father, step mother and sister. He is 16-years-old and enjoys playing soccer and computer games and going to the gym. He stays in Bendigo with a family member on weekends so he can work at a fast food restaurant. Jacob appreciates the quietness and safe feeling in Castlemaine, but he intends to leave Castlemaine and move to Bendigo and look for full-time work once he finishes school. Jacob took an almost identical photo set to Duncan, and raced through the discussion of photographs in the interview.

*Julia, high school graduate*

Julia is 18 and just completed Year 12 at the local secondary college. She is working casually doing odd-jobs like baby-sitting and lawn mowing. She lives at home with her parents, who moved to Castlemaine before she and her brother were born. She plans to take a gap year

and save money to travel internationally, before returning to study in Melbourne. Julia is quite mobile and travels to Melbourne and Bendigo regularly for recreation activities and night life. She absolutely loves Castlemaine, but is looking to experience more places and so doesn't plan to stay in town for much longer. She is fairly certain that she would not want to return to live in Castlemaine when she is older.

*Alex, university student*

Alex is 26 and has returned from Melbourne to his mother's house in Castlemaine in the last year, after spending seven years in Melbourne working in hospitality. He made this return to free up financial and time constraints to enable him to complete his final year of a Bachelor of Fine Arts at a university in Melbourne. He plans to move back to Melbourne to live closer to his girlfriend who is based there, but is conflicted as he has been really enjoying being back in Castlemaine. Alex especially appreciates the quiet, space, and natural places offered in the small town of Castlemaine.

*Naomi, high school student*

Naomi is 17 and has just finished Year 11 at the local high school. She lives with her parents and one of her siblings on a property in bushlands on the outskirts of Castlemaine. She enjoys Castlemaine but she would like to move to Melbourne and study and is not sure whether she would return to Castlemaine to live. Naomi enjoys seeing bands in Castlemaine, and hanging out at cafés, she perceives a feeling of community connectedness in Castlemaine and as a young person feels quite supported by the town. However, she finds being in a small town a bit too quiet, and sometimes boring and looks forward to relocating to Melbourne to study at university after finishing school.

*Dominic, high school graduate*

Dominic lives with his parents and siblings on a rural property about ten minutes' drive from Castlemaine. He has recently completed high school and is working part-time as a life guard

and saving up to travel during a gap year, before possibly moving to Melbourne or elsewhere to study at university. He has found Castlemaine a great place to grow up, but feels the need for change and experiencing different places. Dominic is very socially driven and traverses social groups that he describes as “sporties” and “arties”. He feels comfortable expressing himself through alternative fashion in Castlemaine and finds the community to be generally quite accepting of difference.

*Eli, dance student*

Eli is a 21-year-old who loves dance and movies. He lives in a self-contained studio at his mothers’ house in Castlemaine and works part-time at a local café. Eli has Down syndrome and has a couple of personal support workers who assist him with activities like cooking, shopping and transport. Eli travels to Bendigo and Melbourne by train for practice and performances with his dance troupe. He enjoys living Castlemaine, especially the familiarity with place and people. However, he also has a desire to live internationally, especially in somewhere in America near a beach.

*Grace, high school graduate*

Grace is 18 and has just completed high school and lives at home with her parents in town. She plans to have a gap year, which she will spend saving money and travelling. After this, she imagines she will move to Melbourne to study a degree with a focus on media and communications and maybe international relations. She passionately loves Castlemaine and has found it a great place to grow up, but doesn’t envisage that she would return to live there after travelling and studying. Grace enjoys seeing being able to see live music in Castlemaine and also being able to access surrounding natural sites. She experiences strong friendships and perceives a strong sense of community in Castlemaine.

*Lizzie, university student and mum of two*

Lizzie returned to live in Castlemaine at 19 after living overseas in England for a couple of years. She wouldn't have chosen to return, but was having a child and so felt the need to situated closer to her family and her partner's family. Lizzie works casually, part-time in a couple of hospitality jobs around town, and is studying towards a Bachelor of Arts at university in Bendigo. She loved growing up in Castlemaine. She appreciates the walkability of the town. Even though Lizzie perceives the community in Castlemaine as quite divided, she also perceives the community as being quite close.

*Rebecca, high school student*

Rebecca is 17-years-old and has just completed Year 11 at the local secondary college where she is the vice-captain. She loves living in Castlemaine and sees it as a vibrant, "artsy" and friendly place. Rebecca lives in town at home with her mother and sister and goes to stay with her father in Carisbrook every second weekend. Rebecca had previously been going to high school in Maryborough, but transferred to the local high school in Year Nine. Following school she is interested in studying and working in social work, especially with disadvantaged young people. She imagines that she may have to move away from Castlemaine for work or study, but that she would return to live there at some stage.

*Bodhi, high school student*

Bodhi is 16 and in Year 11 at the local secondary college. He lives between his separated parents' houses, both are located in town in Castlemaine. He traverses the town on bike, which he loves to ride. Bodhi plays soccer with a local men's team, and has a part-time job at the local supermarket. He is actively proud of his home town, and describes it as somewhat of a "hippie" town with a passionate community. While he loves living in Castlemaine, he regrettably envisages that educational and work opportunities will lead him to move to Melbourne, where he wants to study architecture or another related design field.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This brief chapter has helped to contextualise the research participants. Through understanding how the recruitment process might have affected the types of people that were recruited, I remind the reader that neither the intent nor the outcome of the study is to investigate a representative sample of the young population of each case study town. Rather, the participant photographs and voices are used to help build a storied reality throughout the remainder of the thesis, which looks at the nature of young people's place relationships in small country towns. The next chapter uses this data to examine what are the cultural features of place that enhance or diminish young people's sense of place attachment in their home towns.

## Chapter 6. Local cultural capital through the eyes of young people

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the photo-elicitation fieldwork data as it pertains to young people's identified cultural capital of their home towns. This is a descriptive chapter discussing the photo-elicitation results to answer the principal research question: *in what ways do the cultural features of small towns affect place attachment for young people?*

Comparisons between the towns are then made throughout the remaining chapters which involve a deeper analysis and theorising of the photo-elicitation data as it works to build an understanding of young people's social construction of space in Castlemaine and Maryborough.

### 6.2 Part A – Maryborough

#### 6.2.1 Heritage fabric

Several of the photo-elicitation participants photographed historic buildings in Maryborough such as Maryborough Railway Station (see photographs in Appendix A) [identified in photographs 1a10, 1b28, 1e4, 1e14, 1f11, 1f14, 1i16], the town hall [photograph 1e5], post office [photograph 1i18] and historic sites including battery dam [photographs 1a3, 1a4, 1a5, 1a9] and the pioneer memorial tower at Bristol Hill [photographs 1e8, 1i11, 1i7]. The Maryborough Railway Station is the most iconic built feature of Maryborough and the building was pictured in six out of the eleven participants' photographs.

Bobby was one of two participants who felt passionately positive about living in Maryborough. Throughout the research, he indicates that he is highly engaged with and perceptively aware of his surrounding environment. He also continually refers to a pleasure he gains from aesthetic engagement with his surrounding spatial environment. For instance, he discusses wanting to photograph an artwork on someone's private property, he also

photographed street art (discussed in the next segment). His discussions of the heritage buildings he photographed – the railway station and the post office, also indicate that he finds deep aesthetic pleasure in having these physical heritage forms in his local environment.

*Bobby:* [discussing photographs 1e4 and 1e5] Um... I just like how it's, in Maryborough you walk around and you see a lot of the old buildings, some of them have been repainted and re-done up but you still see a lot of the old look and stuff and I like that about Maryborough. If you step into it you kind of create into an old Western scene looking down High Street with all the old buildings and stuff. Yeah and the train station, it's just gorgeous really. It's better at night I wish I had have got a picture at night. And the same with the post office as well. It's just, I like the big towers and the way that they're all just set out, and the fact that the war memorial's in front of it as well, just makes it even better.





*Photograph 1 Maryborough, Bobby, 1e4*



*Photograph 2 Maryborough, Bobby, 1e5*

For Bobby, the goldfields heritage streetscape of his hometown provides a transnational connection – to “an old Western scene”, discussed further in Chapter 9, and is experienced

positively and very overtly through its aesthetic value. Bobby's deep perception of the heritage fabric in the town contrasts to some of the other participants, who, while they photographed the Railway Station for its aesthetic and historical value, were less aware of other heritage sites within the town.

Sara, who was the only participant who uses the rail service to get in and out of Maryborough, discusses her photograph of the Station [1i16, pictured below].

**Sara:** *I honestly think it's a really pretty building. I think it looks really nice and the way they've done it up now, it looks really, really nice and all the inside is so nice, and like, I don't know I think it really, it catches your eye too, when you're driving past you kind of driving through and there's not a lot of things to see in Maryborough as such, it's not kind of like a historical town or whatever, but I think the train station looks really nice.*



*Photograph 3 Maryborough, Sara, 1i16*

For Sara the Railway Station figures as a site of prime historical value. She does not see the rest of the town as historical, and so likely does not notice many of the other old buildings around the town. Greg for instance, when asked why he photographed the station, replied referring to its size.

**Greg:** *It's so big. Compared to everything else in Maryborough? It's like, just – you wouldn't expect it to be there type thing... It's got like a cool architecture style to it. It looks pretty cool too.*

**Ember:** *Are there other old buildings in town that you are fond of?*

**Greg:** *There's probably like a lot of old buildings, but I haven't really [pause]*

**Ember:** *You don't notice them much?*

**Greg:** *Yeah.*

So while Greg appreciates the architectural style of the railway station – presumably for its heritage form, he has a low cognitive awareness of heritage in the town in general. Greg also

photographed another heritage site – Battery Dam [pictured below in 1a5]. For Greg this is a cherished place where he goes for walks with his mother and their dog. He appreciates it for more than just a bushland site as he indicates here:

**Ember:** *And you like going there?*

**Greg:** *Ah, you get to see like a lot of random stuff, in the bush.*

**Ember:** *What type of stuff is that? Like the type of stuff you've photographed – the old industrial things? Do you know what they did there?*

**Greg:** *Um...*

**Ember:** *What they used the site for?*

**Greg:** *Na I can't remember. My dad told me once, I can't remember.*

Though his response is not highly informed or self-reflexive, he indicates an appreciation of the heritage fabric of this site evidenced by the statement regarding coming across “random stuff” on these walks. So here, industrial gold mining remnants provide Greg with a layered experience, perhaps allowing for a sense of discovery and intrigue to be associated with this space.



*Photograph 4 Maryborough, Greg, 1a5*

Megan also photographed the railway station [pictured below and in, 1f14]. She brought up the railway station when I asked her what places in Maryborough where she felt comfortable or welcome.

**Megan:** *Yeah, the train station. They have good coffees and that.*

**Ember:** *Yeah? And do you visit there often?*

**Megan:** *Yeah.*

**Ember:** *Who do you go there with?*

**Megan:** *Um... Sometimes my sister when I drop her off. Or [our teacher] takes us all on coffee runs there.*

**Ember:** *And so do you sort of hang out there or you just go there and get coffee?*

**Megan:** *Um sometimes, it depends how big the class is. Um, but if it's small, we sit there and just have our coffee and just chat about school work.*

**Ember:** *And what else do you like about the place – being there, or the building or...?*

**Megan:** *I don't know, it's just old, and looks pretty.*

**Ember:** *Yep, it's a very beautiful building isn't it?*

**Megan:** *Yeah.*

**Ember:** *Is that something that you feel sort of proud of for the town?*

**Megan:** *Yeah?*

**Ember:** *Yeah – that was sort of an unsure yeah... yes and no?*

**Megan:** *Yeah.*

**Ember:** *Is there anything that you feel proud of in Maryborough?*

**Megan:** *Probably the building – 'cause it's got like, it's old sort of thing.*

Megan admits to being very shy and her photographs and interview reflect that she personally does not engage much or indeed expect much from the Maryborough township itself, but rather prefers spending time in a domestic or bush setting. The iconic feature of the Railway Station though, provides her with a primary point of engagement in the town, through which she values both the social nature of the spatial experience, as well as the historic nature of the physical building. Twice she refers to the age of the building being an attractive aspect of the place. While she does not offer many words to clearly articulate exactly how or why she enjoys this space, she refers to both a social warmth, “chats”, and an aesthetic pleasure, “it’s old and it’s pretty”, gained from engaging with this space.



*Photograph 5 Maryborough, Megan, 1f11*

Mark reveals a deeper appreciation about the historical nature of the building, though this is not an informed appreciation.

**Mark:** *[1b8] Oh the buildings, they're nice... If I had my way I wouldn't change them.*

*It brings history to Maryborough. It brings history.*

**Ember:** *Yep. Do you know much about the history of the place?*

**Mark:** *No not really. I wish I knew more.*

So while Mark claims he does not have much knowledge of the history of his home town, he strongly values the town's historical buildings, including the Railway Station and others in town. As with Bobby – the meaning here is not necessarily found in the historical meaning of the place, but in the aesthetic point of difference that the heritage form brings to the town. Jacki further articulates the nature of heritage fabric “bringing history” to a place, as she discusses her photograph of an old church in Dunolly [photograph 1k2], pictured in Chapter 7.

**Jacki:** *Yeah, I reckon the buildings – how they're made – like the church, that's been there for a very long time. So I like to think that, like if you could just see how it was, back then, like I can imagine it in my head*

While the participants in Maryborough have a varying level of perceptive awareness of built heritage throughout the town, the Railway Station provides a distinctive, iconic backdrop that is instantly identifiable as heritage. The large, grandiose physical form provides a point-of-difference in the town, its spatial uniqueness perhaps part of the attractor. Hence the station featured so prominently in the photographs. Built heritage for these young people contributes to their experience of the town a texture and a sense of history not valued for any detailed historical meaning but more so for its aesthetic value and the *feel* of history.

#### 6.2.1 Touring graffiti

Two of the photo-elicitation participants in Maryborough had a significant focus in their photographs on graffiti, each having taken multiple photographs of freight trains outside Maryborough railway station, which are covered in graffiti [as seen in Appendix A, photographs 1e11, 1e12, 1e13, 1e14, 1b8, 1b11, 1b21 and 1b25]. When Bobby was asked about why he had taken these photographs [Appendix A, photographs 1e11, 1e12, 1e13, 1e14], he indicates his appreciation of the work put in by the graffiti artists, and the fact that the audience for this type of creative expression is broad and unknown.

**Bobby:** *I just love that people put what's theirs on there and then ... you know who would see it, you know, imagine the person that it took the time to spray it on there and then, it's eventually worked its way around to me. And then I've been able to see it and take pictures of it. And then I just thought, added in with the train station it's perfect shots for photos.*





*Photograph 6 Maryborough, Bobby, 1e14*

When questioned further about his appreciation for this form of visual art, Bobby's response indicates that he really enjoys the roving nature of the artworks as they travel on the sides of the trains throughout the countryside as well as the fluid and changing nature of the artform as one work is replaced by another.

**Bobby:** ... some of it's just amazing what they can pull off. And, it just tours around everywhere so, just the amount of people that will see it, the amount of people that will go 'oh' and just looked around and gone – I'm one of the people that's been able to see that before it gets tagged over again. It's just a constant cycle.

**Ember:** It sounds like a touring gallery.

**Bobby:** Yeah that's it – it's a touring gallery. That's right.

When asked if he made street art himself, Bobby replied that he did practice a little, but diminished his own efforts in comparison to the types of work he saw on the freight trains,

indicating that he sees the artworks that travel around on the trains as admirable and perhaps a skill level to aspire to.

**Bobby:** *oh, yeah... not as good as that though [laughs], nowhere near as good as that. Yeah but I do a little bit of small stuff.*

Mark also took multiple photographs of the graffitied trains behind the railway station in Maryborough [Appendix A, photographs 1b8, 1b11, 1b21 and 1b25]. When asked why he took those photos, he replies:

**Mark:** *I just like seeing all the graffitied trains go through there. Because I really like graffiti.*

**Ember:** *OK – so there’s another one there, that’s number 11 of a graffiti freight train. So do you make street art as well or you...*

**Mark:** *No I sit there and draw it in books and do, like, graffiti.*

**Ember:** *What does it make you feel when you see those graffitied trains?*

**Mark:** *I kind of really – I see other people’s accomplishments, cos they’re getting their name out there. And everyone else is seeing it as vandalism, but I see it as their expression. So yeah.*

**Ember:** *And do you know any of them – are there crews here that do street art*

**Mark:** *Oh there are a fair few crews here that do street art, and yeah, I do know a couple of them.*

**Ember:** *So is there sort of a bit of pride attached to knowing people that have put their work up?*

**Mark:** *Oh there is a little bit of pride into it.*

**Ember:** *Do you think – are there other places in Maryborough, apart from the trains are there other places that are up for changing street art or graffiti?*

**Mark:** *Not really. Everyone else sees it as vandalism and they don't want anything like it.*



*Photograph 7 Maryborough, Bobby, 1e14*

While Mark sees the skill and work of people who have painted these large works on train carriages as admirable, he senses that people in the town cannot see past the concept of it being vandalism. Mark's artform of choice is not valued by others in Maryborough and this perhaps contributes to his sense of boredom and frustration that he associates with the town, which is discussed in Chapter 7. The value placed by young people on this artform could be linked back to a complex relationship between notoriety and anonymity of the graffiti artists. Street art is often undertaken as an illicit activity, not sanctioned as public art and is often associated with masculinity (for example, see Macdonald, 2001). It is also typically associated with urban youth and street culture, in a way that that is somewhat incongruous in the rural town of Maryborough. As the young people point out it offers its

viewers a sort of mental mobility – an opportunity to transgress the borders of the small town and access urban cultural capital without leaving home.

This aspect of place that Bobby and Mark have a strong appreciation of in their home town is not socially produced or locally based, but rather the result of the tactics of presumed urban young people to territorialise, claim space, and build notoriety among their peers. Whereas the Arts Officer at CGSC admits that the Council had limited success in engaging young people in arts-based programs (discussed in Chapter 4), this appreciation of a typically urban artform in Maryborough demonstrates that young people are indeed interested in and appreciate creative expression.

#### 6.2.2 Recreation facilities



*Photograph 8 Maryborough, Frances 1d3*

Parks are identified by several participants in Maryborough as good for kids but not for teenagers, as discussed in the following chapter on 'boredom'. Despite this however parks and gardens arose significantly in the photo-elicitation data as both individually reflective

leisure spots, and places of social engagement and interaction. For Frances, the photograph above [1d3] of a particular park bench, taken from inside her car, is a spot that she returns to regularly on walks with her dog. She experiences this as a quiet and reflective space.

**Frances:** *So, this is where I go when I'm looking for inspiration. And I usually take my dog down here – which is Princes Park where they also hold the EBT [Energy BreakThrough]. Yeah so that was that. I just usually sit on the bench that's in the photo, I just sit there with my dog and everything. Yeah, I just take him for long walks and stuff. Yeah, I love my dog to bits.*

Other discussions of parks though, reflected a more social engagement experienced there.

For instance, Lola discusses in detail memories she has with friends in this park. Her account illustrates a social, visceral engagement with the park as a physical play space.

**Lola:** *[Friends] had come over to visit me and like, we were playing truth-or-dare over in this park area, and she got dared to climb the tree, and we all thought she'd go "back up dare, back up dare!" 'Cause she's scared of heights. But she tried it and she got about like, almost half way up it and she lost her grip and she fell and as she fell she turned and landed on her wrist. And she recorded her telling her parents that she broke her wrist climbing a tree and their reaction was so funny.*

Lola's photograph [pictured below in 1j1] – which was taken of her by a friend – picturing her standing atop the sign, arms spread wide in a posture of power and enjoyment, further illustrates the positive embodied form of engagement experienced within the space. Posing in front of friends, the space is also social and performative.



*Photograph 9 Maryborough, Lola 1j1*

Nina – who herself is cited in the following chapter as suggesting the parks in Maryborough are for younger kids, and do not contain much to attract teenagers – also photographed one of the parks in Maryborough. She describes a different form of social engagement within this space – which for her is a destination for the game Pokemon Go.

***Nina:** Um, and since Pokemon Go's come out a lot of people will be in there now. Cos I play it... And there'll be people walking around the lake with their phones out. Cos there's five PokeStops sort of around it. And so they'll do a lap of it, and by, they go to each PokeStop and by the time they get back to the first one, it's recharged, so you can go around again. And again.*

Here Nina's engagement with the space is premised on a mobile networked game which relates to geo-cached "PokeStops" as sites that need to be visited to collect tokens in the game. She perceives that the level of use of this space has increased by the addition of "PokeStops" to the space. While the game may be a short-lived fad, the construction of this

site as a gaming stop allows for a combination of activities to occur here: gaming, chatting, and strolling take place intermittently and repeatedly.



*Photograph 10 Maryborough, Nina, 1h2*

### *Skate Park*

The skate park featured in several different conversations and photographs and was discussed in a range of different forms of use or non-use. Skate parks seem ubiquitous in every locality, as Councils tick off their provision of youth-focussed urban spaces, none of the participants in Maryborough discuss actually skateboarding or scooting in this space. A couple of participants mentioned memories of attending the skate park when the CGSC arranged professional skating competitions there, but that these kinds of events were rare. Mark discusses going to the skate park for a memorial tribute for a local friend who had passed away and was an avid skater. Of all the participant discussions referring to the skate park, Bobby appears to have the most long standing and continuing relationship with this space.

**Bobby:** *Um, I go there every day since I can remember, I'd catch the bus. And then I remember in winter all the jumps'd be frozen as ice and we'd collect it all up and throw snowballs at each other. Yeah or in the summer we used to kick an empty plastic bottle around and the two quarter pipes at each end were the goals and you'd have to skimmy through and a massive work out before school, you'd get on the bus and you'd be huffing and puffing and all sweaty...*

**Ember:** *So you'd make these kind of games up that aren't necessarily using it as what it's made for?*

**Bobby:** *That's right. But yeah, it's just an awesome place. I never really skated on it I don't think [laughs].*

**Ember:** *Yeah. And um so you still go there now to hang out?*

**Bobby:** *Ah, yeah every now and again I meet up with people there – it's like a half-way point to meet or um, just here there's a seat and there's some benches so... and just up the road there's the Majorca Rd shop, seen in 1e10. Um. And I'll go buy some chips go over just sit there, again look at the graffiti and just chill out?*

So while Bobby does not skate, he and his friends feel comfortable being in this space and engaging creatively and imaginatively. For Bobby then, this space is experienced as a space that Aitken (2001) describes as being of “of unmitigated potential, creativity and imagination” (p. 177). Aitken (2001) claims however that these kinds of spaces are diminishing, as adults impose more and more control and regulations over space. For Bobby this is a space of belonging, of social interaction and of creative/imaginative games. In further questioning as to whether he feels the skate park is a very welcome space, he replies:

**Bobby:** *Yeah, yeah. Well for anybody really. For everybody. Just to come and chill, ride jumps. Nobody's excluded. So, it's a nice welcome zone.*





*Photograph 11 Maryborough, Bobby, 1e8*

While Bobby views this space as open and welcoming of anyone, others see it as territorialised and exclusive. In response to my question about whether there is anywhere in town that she feels unwelcome, Nina talks about the skate park:

**Nina:** *Unwelcome – I reckon that place would probably be – I don't go there at all – but it would probably be the skate park. I don't go there because I don't have a scooter, skateboard, roller skates with me when I'm in town. So I don't go there. But if I did go there, I'd feel really out of place, because it's mostly males there, and it's also quite small. And that would be quite an impact with running into each other in some way.*

Nina goes on to discuss the social grouping scenario that leads to her feeling unwelcome at the skate park – that some of her year level at school, boys who are not in her social group there are likely to hang out at the skate park – and for her it makes the prospect of going there very unappealing.

*Nina: Yeah, different social groups but same year level. And yeah, if I'm by myself I feel really unsettled. And, yeah out of place. But with my friends I'm fine, I'm the most outgoing person there is. That's the case with most people after all. But yeah, the Skate Park's the one place that feel's really out of bounds.*

So while Bobby feels that this is a welcoming zone where no one is excluded, Nina perceives it to be socially exclusive, territorialised and gendered.

### *Sports*



*Photograph 12 Maryborough, Sara, 1i22*

Several of the participants indicated that group sport activities were an important feature of their social world in Maryborough. Bobby, for instance plays Australian Rules with one of the local football teams and talked positively about that experience. Others talked fondly of sporting activity as a memory, but as something they could no longer participate in due to other commitments. Sara, for instance, speaks at length of her memories of Princes Park [as pictured above in 1i22].

**Sara:** *I guess, and it's just where, I don't know, when I was younger and stuff its where my brothers used to play football and stuff, so I'd go from like my netball and whatever, to here and it's just kind of – I don't know, I think it's like, something significant in Maryborough to me ... like I feel like whenever I'm there, like it's always a good time.*

Whether playing or spectating, sport in Sara's hometown is an indicator of a happy time and place. Sara spoke extremely fondly of her time playing netball, however indicated that she had to give up in order to gain employment. Here she discusses photograph 1i14 [pictured in Appendix A].

**Sara:** *Yeah, so they're the netball courts. I used to love netball, I used to play netball and it wasn't until I started working I gave it up because I wanted to make money instead of playing. And I pretty much started playing when I was like a preppy. Did netta [colloquialism for netball], and then I just played right up until, I was like sixteen when I stopped, so I don't know, that's where I spent every Saturday morning in the winter, yeah.*

While netball for Sara is a really important social event, ultimately the desire to have money through employment wins out. Tessa was in a similar position to Sara, in that she formerly played both netball and football, but was not able to continue playing due to her part-time job.

**Tessa:** *Because of work it was hard. Yeah, I had to quit football because of work as well. Because of training I had to work the days that training was on.*

**Ember:** *So if it wasn't for work do you think you'd keep playing?*

**Tessa:** *Yeah definitely, yeah definitely.*

The stories of Sara and Tessa both echo the sentiments of three of the different stakeholders interviewed, who all spoke of declining participation in sporting activities in Maryborough among young people, due to the need or want to work.<sup>5</sup>

### 6.2.3 Events

Tessa was unusual amongst the participants in that, when asked what was good about living in a small town, she initially discussed the quietness of the town as one of its attractive features. Here is her response to my question about what are the good things about living in a small town as opposed to a larger place.

**Tessa:** *A small town. I guess less goes on. And if you live in a big town there's so much going on, I wouldn't feel comfortable. I feel more comfortable in a smaller town. Not that many people. So, it's nicer that way I reckon.*

**Ember:** *So is it more manageable knowing what's happening and...*

**Tessa:** *Yeah, and where everything is, and what's going on.*

Tessa really appreciates being somewhere that has fewer people than a big city, as it means she knows what is happening at any given point in time. However, when I asked her what was a negative factor about living in Maryborough she respond by referring to the lack of activities available.

**Tessa:** *Um, I guess there's not as much to do. You can't really explore a lot. But, it's still good.*

The smallness and the quietness of Maryborough is at once an attractive feature of the town for Tessa as well as a negative aspect of the reality of living there. However, while she claims that a lack of things to do and places to go was a negative, in Tessa's experience, this is

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<sup>5</sup> Stated in the following interviews - Place Manager, Go Goldfields, 29 June 2016; Youth Services Officer, Central Goldfields Shire Council, 29 June 2016; and Youth Council Officer, Central Goldfields Shire Council, 29 June 2016.

ultimately not bad enough to detract from her appreciation of the town: “but, it’s still good”, she maintains.

These contradictions highlight the complex nature of young people’s experience of place and the importance of qualitative research to deepen our understanding of it. While Tessa appreciates the quietness of Maryborough, and all of her photographs were taken at two un-peopled and predominantly naturally based sites – Avoca Falls and Bristol Hill – throughout the interview, when discussing things happening in Maryborough that she really enjoys, Tessa consistently refers to large annual events that bring extra people and vibrancy to the town. These included the RACV Energy Breakthrough (often referred to as EBT) – an event in which school groups from across Victoria design, construct and race human powered vehicles, the relay for life – a running event raising funds for cancer research, and the former Mardi Gras – a street carnival that no longer occurs. All of these events involve the congregation of large numbers of people and the provision of entertainment to see and activities to take part in. When expanding on what she liked about EBT, Tessa refers to appreciating the large number of people who are brought into town by the event:

**Tessa:** *[pauses] Energy Breakthrough, that’s pretty cool. Yeah, I like that – it’s nice, a good environment and a lot of things going on. Yeah, it’s nice to be around.*

**Ember:** *So what are your favourite things about that event?*

**Tessa:** *I guess just all the new people that come, like you get to meet so many people, it’s nice. Yeah, just all the new people you meet, it’s pretty cool. You get to meet some groovy people.*

**Ember:** *How does it make you feel about your town when that event is on?*

**Tessa:** *It makes me feel like it’s known, like it’s not just a little country town, people actually know where it is because of the big event that happens. It’s probably the only big event we have.*

For Tessa, the situation of Maryborough in the minds and actions of outsiders is important, which helps to make the town feel like more than “just a little country town”, which is experienced positively. This extra visitation to Maryborough during such a big event has the effect of young local people being able to meet a range of people other than local residents and contributes to positive associations with the town for Tessa. Other participants though spoke more negatively of the same event. Nina initially shares similar sentiments to Tessa in her appreciation of the EBT bringing people to town and the sense of vibrancy that comes along with it.

**Nina:** *Um, Energy Breakthrough, which is coming up again. Um, that's a quite enjoyed act, you get people from everywhere coming down to see it – Warrnambool, Ballarat, Bendigo, cause we host it here and we end up with – um, the Princes Park area, it's normally filled with people and lights, the oval is normally filled with tents and everything for people staying, yeah it's a quite enjoyed act / event.*

**Ember:** *And so how do you feel about your town when that's on?*

**Nina:** *Um, I'm proud of it because we can host it and do have a pretty good reputation from the outsiders.*

However, as she continues speaking, Nina also describes a source of embarrassment and frustration during the event coming from a contingent of local people who she sees as being destructive and detracting from the positive features of this event.

**Nina:** *Um, but it also is kind of embarrassing, if you're hanging out with a group of people, and then you see other people from your area, and they've seen you and they're doing something inappropriate or... it's kind of embarrassing.*

**Ember:** *Right, so does that happen a lot – you see other people that you know from school or something?*

**Nina:** *Doing something – yeah, a little bit like one of the main things that happened at Energy Breakthrough, every year non-stop, there'll be people throwing stuff out onto the tracks. I did track marshalling for about eight years ... But on crash corner, as we call it – because it comes down this hill, and there's a quick "S" bend and there'll be three trikes going and they'll pile up and other times there'll be people with flat tires and they'll go "yeah I think it was down at crash corner" and we'll find out that someone's been putting tacks or something on the track.*

**Ember:** *Oh really.*

**Nina:** *Yep, and popping everyone's tyres, causing more and more crashes, causing more and more...*

**Ember:** *and why do you think they do that?*

**Nina:** *Um, a bit of enjoyment.*

**Ember:** *You think they enjoy seeing the chaos?*

**Nina:** *Yeah. You'll get a massive crowd around corners one and two which is crash corners, but then on the other corners you don't really get anyone. And it's kind of annoying if you've seen someone from your school throw stuff onto the track, and it's also quite embarrassing for the town.*

So this major event is at once a source of pride *and* embarrassment for Nina, who is especially frustrated by personally knowing the people who may like to cause disturbances at such an event. For her, seeing someone behave in a delinquent manner is personally confronting and embarrassing.

While both Nina and Tessa value the EBT event for the number of people that come into the town for it, Frances has negative associations with the event, *because* of the amount of people who flock to the town. Frances provided a photograph of the event along with the

pictures that she took on her camera [see 1d4]. She added this photograph in response to the prompt take a photograph of a place/event/activity that you dislike. Here she discusses her frustrations with the busyness of town during the event.

**Frances:** *Yeah it's just the number of people is ridiculous. And yeah, it's annoying, especially if you go there throughout the day. There's so many people around. You've got people who just sit there in the middle of the pathway and they don't move and they just sit there and they talk and it annoys me. And I'm like, "can't you just talk somewhere else, like off the pathway".*

Frances also laments the difficulties with parking and driving through town during this event. While the event acts as a negative feature for Frances, inhibiting her from going about her normal life, she also discusses going out and enjoying the extra activities on offer in the evenings once the main crowds had died down.

There are a number of activities that used to occur within the town that no longer operate. Some of these were brought up by numerous participants and discussed as activities, events or places they remembered fondly from their childhoods and wished were still available. For instance, Tessa describes the *Mardi Gras*, a carnival-like event that used to be hosted annually in the main street of Maryborough.<sup>6</sup>

**Tessa:** *Um, when I was little, there used to be, like just big floats and stuff down the main street and all the shops would be open, and I remember getting slushies all the time when it happened, so I was pretty happy. But it shut down. Yeah, it was just like a whole fun day of like parades, activities, and other little – it was really cool. Back then it was the most amazing thing I had ever seen. Confetti everywhere, it was nice.*

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<sup>6</sup> (I attempted to find more information about this event, but nothing existed online and as far as I can tell it had nothing to do with emulating either the *Mardi Gras*' of Brazil or New Orleans, and was also not related to gay and lesbian *Mardi Gras* events, but more like a street carnival).



This annual day of vibrant activity within Tessa's hometown prompts fond memories.

Frances also has positive memories of the *Mardi Gras* and could not understand why it was discontinued.

**Frances:** *Um... I was going to say, bring back the bloody Mardi Gras!! ... [It] used to be held in the main High Street, and it was basically kind of like ... a little Show and all that. So they'd have all these um like, side show things. I can't think of what they would be called – like, attractions and stuff like that. So like, you know, it might be you have to catch a duck and if you catch a certain duck you get a prize from it and everything like that.*

**Ember:** *So is it a bit like a carnival or a fair?*

**Frances:** *Yeah, it was kind of like that. And um, I asked [our teacher] not that long ago why did they quit it. Like, it was the best thing around. I loved going to the Mardi Gras. Every year we used to have it. And then suddenly it just stopped. And, I was thinking – well, why – why did it stop? And everything. I want to know. Because it was honestly the best thing that ever was in Maryborough. Like there was so many people and everything.*

While Frances had previously spoken negatively of the EBT event, which brings 15-20,000 visitors into town, she spoke completely positively of the now defunct *Mardi Gras* event – perhaps for Frances something that involves thousands of visitors to the town is just too large an event for her town – it is of a much different scale to the *Mardi Gras*. The notion of scale has emerged as an important factor in understanding young people's engagement with place in regional small towns. For instance, in her interview, Sara described Maryborough as a bit boring and lacking in entertainment for young people. However, as she discussed this in more detail, it became clear that this is partly due to the town actually being too large. Sara said she often prefers to spend time in smaller neighbouring towns of Carisbrook and

Clunes, because these are smaller places that are more traversable and have easier access to places to explore like creeks and bushlands and home spaces, discussed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. None of the young men who participated raised major events as an aspect of the town that they either appreciated or disliked.

#### 6.2.4 Conclusion Maryborough

The predominant themes that have emerged in Maryborough include built heritage fabric, street art, parks and gardens, sports and major events. A significant range of photographs and discussions also emerged in the research on rural and bushland spaces outside of the town and are discussed in the following two chapters – as spaces to alleviate boredom, and escape the gaze of the close rural community. Further findings on home are also discussed in Chapter 8. Notably absent from the photographic dataset are any interior photographs of spaces that are not home or school. In the next section I will discuss the photo-elicitation findings in Castlemaine.

### 6.3 Part B – Castlemaine

The photo-elicitation fieldwork in Castlemaine prompted a much wider range of spaces and activities valued by young people than in Maryborough. Sites photographed and discussed in Castlemaine include a wide range of spaces right throughout the town as well as in surrounding natural areas. There is less of a congregation of types of spaces and activities as appeared in Maryborough. I argue that this diversity of sites and activities in Castlemaine is an effect of the more individualistic and less conservative nature of the town as compared with Maryborough. Consequently, young people in Castlemaine having more spatial confidence and/or feel more welcome right across the town's public and third spaces as well as the town's surrounding natural environment.

### 6.3.1 Cosmopolitan Castlemaine – the prevalence of cafés in young people’s regular routines

Cafés feature significantly in the Castlemaine research participants’ photographs [for example, see photographs 3b12, 3d23, 3h11, 3i13, 3k19, 3l1, 3n7]. The interviews identify cafés as popular spaces for Castlemaine young people to socialise, enjoy food and relax. Cafés also arose in discussions outside of the photographs. For instance, Isabelle includes cafés when discussing how she feels about living in Castlemaine, “Castlemaine’s nice. Castlemaine’s cool... you know, there’s a café on every block [laughs]”.

One café in particular, Safs, features in the photographs of five different participants [pictured in 3k2, 3h11, 3i13, 3n7, and 3j3]. For Grace and Dominic, Safs is a site for post-party recovery for themselves along with their broader social groups. Both Grace and Dominic refer to the financial impact of spending time in cafés – and at Safs in particular. They both talk about having spent a lot of money there over time, and Grace in particular says that she would spend her last available money on eating and drinking with friends in this café. This points to the regular occurrence as well as the significant value attributed to participating in this activity. The atmosphere present at this particular café is a significant attractor, as is the knowledge that a morning there can be quickly and easily arranged and will be likely to casually and informally evolve into a significant social event. For Dominic and Grace, this post-party ritual expands the temporal bounds of the party, enabling a deeper social engagement, which both participants value greatly.

**Grace:** [3k2] ... I spend so much money there, because after a party or something like that people are like “let’s go down to Safs for breakfast” and I’ll check my bank account and be like [excited tone] “I can just afford this! Yep, sure”.

**Dominic:** [3i13] It’s Safs and it’s, like, whenever we have a night out or anything, in the morning we’ll go in there at one or two and end up being like 15 people from the

*party the night before in Safs. Or whenever we're walking in town and thinking what will we do for lunch we just go there for, better atmosphere. The coffee is pretty average there but it's a nice atmosphere I really like Safs. I've probably spent like \$3,000 there [laughs]. Every one of my friends has.*



*Photograph 13 Castlemaine, Grace, 3k2<sup>7</sup>*



*Photograph 14 Castlemaine, Dominic, 3i13*

All of the participants who have photographs of cafés, including Grace and Dominic, discuss the experience of spending time in cafés in terms of the positive social implications and atmospheric quality. For Eli, Safs [pictured in 3j3, interior photograph with insufficient lighting] provides an important site for making and strengthening social connections. He works part-time at Safs washing dishes, and describes getting to know customers who greet him when he is walking around Castlemaine, which is experienced very positively.

The social capital that Eli builds through working at the café, extends to positive, friendly, social experiences on his way around town. This is contrasted to what he considers it would be like in a more densely populated place. In asking how he thinks this would be different if he was living in a bigger town or a city, he states “yeah there would be way more people and they’re all busy-busy-busy”. Naomi, who also photographed Safs, values cafés specifically as places to go that offer a pleasant experience and a site for strengthening social networks,

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<sup>7</sup> As noted in the Methodology chapter, and outlined in the Plain Language Information Statements, all photographs that contain identifiable people will be used in the examiners’ thesis copy only. Faces will be anonymised in the final copy of the thesis and in any publications arising from the thesis.

including the inverse of the scenario described by Eli, in which she appreciates building a relationship with staff at the café.

**Naomi:** *[3h11] So, that was at Safs, which you may know of. Yeah that's just another thing, there's lots of good little cafés in Castlemaine. It's nice to be able to go somewhere ... It's a good place to connect with friends. Also you get to know people working at cafés so you sort of build a bit of connection with the people as well, which is nice.*

For Lizzie, another café is a place she values deeply as a site for spontaneous and relaxed social engagement with her children in tow. She photographed a street coffee window that had closed down just recently [pictured in 3l23], and explains at length the value she had ascribed to this place and the sense of loss she feels at its closure.

**Lizzie:** *[3l23] So, I feel really sad about [it closing down]. Because, you know there's lots of lovely coffee places in town, but there was nowhere that made me feel as good, as much a part of the community as that. Because I'd go at 7 and it would just be me and a few tradies and then I'd come back at 9 and it would be all of the mums wandering up from [a dance studio] where they'd just dropped their kids at dance or just dropped their kids at Kinder, and it would be a real meeting point. So I feel really sad about that because there's just nothing quite like that, so I think that's something that we'll really miss, because between 9 and 11 it was a place for mums. And that was really nice. And yeah, there's just nowhere else quite like that in town. Which I think is really something that you need.*

Lizzie's descriptions of her visits to this place, illustrate the habitual regularity through which she experiences the place. This sense of a coffee window on the street helping her feel like a "part of the community" indicates a significant social value associated with this place, and an ease and familiarity through which it is experienced. For young people in Castlemaine then,

the café experience provides not just a space to eat and drink, but a space in which social networks can be strengthened and social capital can be expanded. These places align with Ray Oldenburg's (1999) description of the "third place", that is, a public place outside of home (first place) and work (or education institution – second place). Third places "host regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 16). The prevalence with which research participants in Castlemaine value and engage with cafés relates strongly to the gentrified nature of the town and thus is connected to elements of class, which is explored in-depth in Chapter 9 of this thesis.

### 6.3.2 Retail and eateries

Another significant theme that emerged through the photo-elicitation research in Castlemaine is local retail shops and family run eateries. The eateries discussed differ to cafés in that they are places young people go to get food, as opposed to cafés, which are places to hang out and socialise. Here, local business, second hand goods, and shopping at local markets were valued by the young participants in Castlemaine as these types of retail experiences reflected a connection to social values. This is discussed in depth in Chapter 10.

### 6.3.3 Street art

A number of the research participants took photographs of graffiti or street art in Castlemaine as a point of interest. The street art appreciated by the young people in Castlemaine appears to be driven by either a sense of wit or politics. It also differs from the street art discussed in Maryborough in that here it is internally created, rather than touring on trains from presumably urban locations. For instance, Rebecca's photograph of a paste up on a post box with the words "I hate Nazis". Here she discusses this as a lead-in to talk about some street art that she made in high school that received significant attention from the local community.



Photograph 15 Castlemaine, Rebecca, 3m3

**Rebecca:** *Number 3 is a picture of some street art and it's a bit political. So I thought that was really cool. Especially because like, our town can be very opinionated, and we like to express ourselves – like I did a bit of street art against [then Prime Minister] Tony Abbott in Year 10 and posted that up around town and it didn't get very good responses, but it was fun.*

Rebecca's 2015 artwork stated "Australia needs an Abbott Proof Fence", and was pictured in the Bendigo Advertiser in July 2015 (Holmes, 2015a, 2015b) after causing significant outrage amongst some community members and a couple of fellow students. The work was completed as a part of a street art program at the local secondary college and posted up on a Council-built fence as a designated space for changing displays of street art. Here Rebecca explains the episode from her perspective.

**Rebecca:** *There was this massive thing, because in Year 10, we had the street art program at school where we put street art up against the wall opposite the library. So we put anti-Abbott posters up. And some people in Castlemaine lost their minds.*

*They created a Facebook page and they were constantly arguing against us. Then we ended up getting in the newspaper – like the Bendigo Advertiser, so I think that was pretty impressive. It was fun.*

**Ember:** *Well at least you know you've got impact! And causing discussion.*

**Rebecca:** *Yeah it's fun. It makes people rethink themselves.*

**Ember:** *Was it surprising to you that there was such a backlash against it?*

**Rebecca:** *Honestly a little bit yeah. I didn't think our town was like that. But then the main ringleader, who used to go to Castlemaine [Secondary], is one year below me ... he is so in favour of Tony Abbot, it's scary.*

**Ember:** *So does this type of political street art – paste ups and stuff, does that kind of happen a bit?*

**Rebecca:** *Yeah sometimes around Castlemaine there'd be more than what you'd see in Maryborough or something like that. Because the artsyness, I keep using that word. But people just love expressing their opinions. And sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's not – but free speech. You can't really hate someone because of what they think.*

Rebecca attributes the graffiti around Castlemaine to the “artsyness” of the place and relates this form of creativity to freedom of expression – which, while in this instance caused significant conflict, she still sees as a positive aspect of place. The conflict around this street art wall is further discussed in Chapter 10.

Isabelle photographed the Council designated street art wall concerned. While she stated that she generally does not like or condone graffiti, and views it as vandalism, she does see a role for this type of sanctioned street art. Here is her response to asking her about her feelings about having this place in her town, pictured in 3a4.





Photograph 16 Castlemaine, Isabelle, 3a4

**Isabelle:** *They are very often political. I do think it's really great to have a representation of these sorts of beliefs. I also feel like ... it sort of allows street art to be expressed in an appropriate way. Because some of them are political but then there are other ones which are addressing other issues. But they all address issues and I feel like if you're not just being a loser and a pain to your entire community, that's what you're doing with graffiti / street art is you're trying to express the problems that you think are inherent and are being ignored within the community and I think it's really good to have a place where it is accepted for young people to do this and you can, you know channel that constructively.*

Isabelle clearly articulates a felt sense of importance of a space such as the Council-owned street art wall. Even though she does not use it personally, for Isabelle this is a positive phenomenon, a space particularly for young people to express ideas, whether about political issues or other issues that affect a community. For her this is an acceptable and constructive

place for outward creative expression that perhaps otherwise would be considered vandalism.

The two other sites of graffiti or street art that were documented by the research participants were not political but were received as humorous or ironic expressions. Dominic photographed a rock that had been spray-painted at the top of Mount Alexander [photograph 3i17]. The graffiti here appears to have been done in a more spontaneous manner than the artworks developed in the school-based program shown on walls in town.

Lizzie photographed a “Stop” sign, which had been vandalised with a sticker to say “Stop *hammer time*” a humorous nod to late 1980s / early 1990s pop recording artist MC Hammer.



*Photograph 17 Castlemaine, Lizzie, 314*

**Lizzie:** *Um, I just took this one because someone’s gone around town and graffitied all the stop signs with things like “Stop: Hammer time” and “Stop: In the name of love” ... but again, when it happened I was like – “oh that’s really cute”. Like no one’s gonna not stop because they’ve put some little letters underneath, so it’s not really*

*destructive... and I really liked it because the Council came along, and instead of taking it away they moved that Stop sign down and put a new one on top, so I thought that was really sweet.*

Lizzie strongly appreciates the fact that rather than replacing the sign completely, Council workers had lowered it and introduced a new one above. This response from a bureaucratic government organisation in permitting of a playful and humorous engagement public space is experienced very positively by Lizzie.

Dominic also discusses a photograph he took of a graffitied rock at Mount Macedon [pictured in 1i17 in Appendix B].

**Dominic:** *And um 17 is a rock at the top of there, where some kids have written “meth till death” which is pretty ironic... Yeah it’s just another stupid thing like people tag stuff like candy rock and we just look at it and go [sarcastic tone] “yeah! It’s so cool!”*

It is unclear whether the graffiti pictured was intended to be sarcastic or not. For Dominic and his peer group however it is received ironically, so we can surmise that they view the author of this graffiti as earnest or trying to be cool. Dominic and his peers know that the sentiment is so not cool, that the whole thing becomes a sarcastic joke. Throughout the interview Dominic repeatedly refers to instances in which he engages with places in and around Castlemaine through role-playing intertwined with sarcasm and irony. Perhaps he and his friendship group enjoy this type of place engagement as they play with subtle sub-cultural codes while performing their own identity development.

#### 6.3.4 Theatre Royal – nostalgia or nightlife?

A range of the photo-elicitation participants in Castlemaine took photographs of, and/or discussed the town’s pubs in their interviews. However, there are mixed and contested

feelings about these places. The Theatre Royal appears in seven of the photo-elicitation participant's photographs. In some cases, it was photographed and discussed purely for its nostalgic value, as a site associated with fond childhood memories. The Theatre is discussed as a place participants would visit as kids with their families, to watch movies and get ice cream. Rebecca and Bodhi both discuss their photographs of the Theatre purely in terms of their nostalgic connection.

**Bodhi:** [3n6] *Like as a kid I'd go there to get ice-creams, or maybe didn't go to the movies in Bendigo, you know we'd go to the movies with my parents.*

**Rebecca:** [3m1] *When I was a kid I used to go there all of the time to watch movies. So it's a bit nostalgic... And they used to have Blue Light discos there and I loved them when I was in primary school.*



Photograph 18 Castlemaine, Bodhi, 3n6



Photograph 19 Castlemaine, Rebecca, 3m1

For both Bodhi and Rebecca the Theatre Royal is not a place that really comes into their realm of social experience in the present. But the architecture, atmosphere and memories of their experience there, make the site an iconic place they associate with the town. Bodhi articulates this directly in saying:

**Bodhi:** *I think this is a very probably iconic place in Castlemaine as well like the botanical gardens. Just because of the kind of, you know it's a place where a lot of people have gone to hang out.*

Duncan is the only one of seven participants who photographed the Theatre Royal to convey a negative association with Castlemaine. When I ask him if he would ever go there to see a movie or a band he replies adamantly “No, it sucks! It just completely sucks, the food’s expensive. I wouldn’t go. I wouldn’t watch a movie there.” Here he discusses his photograph of the Theatre, 3d7:

**Duncan:** *3d7 is a picture of the Theatre Royal, which, I don’t really like it to be honest. It sort of – it’s where the more like the cliquey type Castlemaine people hang out I guess.*

For Duncan this site represents an exclusive element of Castlemaine, which he does not feel welcomed by. He perceives this place to be exemplary of what he dislikes about Castlemaine, which is discussed further in Chapter 10.

Lizzie, on the other hand, charts a more ongoing positive association with the place, continuing right from memories of childhood experience to a site she visits in the present-day as a music venue.

**Lizzie:** *[3/14] I’ve been going there all my life in different ways. I used to go when I was a kid in different ways. Yeah, I used to go when I was a kid and get ice cream with my parents. and then when I was 14 I worked there for a year or so, in the front, and that was my first proper job which was really exciting... Yeah and now I go there to go to concerts and go to events and stuff and it’s really fantastic.*

Lizzie, Dominic, and Grace all pointed out stories of changing ownership and focus of the theatre that made it difficult to maintain a strong connection with the place as an ongoing venue. Dominic perceives that as a present-day venue the Theatre Royal has been changing, noting “it’s just been passing hands so much recently” and “staff are not as welcoming, there’s something just that’s a bit off”. Grace notes, “the Theatre Royal hasn’t had much good music recently”. Lizzie points out that the venue has changed owners again recently

and she feels excited about its future as a music venue, she claims “It’s going to be really exciting, because it’s been a bit dead for a while now unfortunately.”

Throughout the interviews, similar descriptions arose regarding other venues in town. The Bridge hotel, for instance, is described as having had appeal in the past but not as much now. Alex, Grace, Dominic and Lizzie all talk about having changing affections for this particular venue. This description of the lack of consistency and reliability of particular venues in town appears to negatively impact on the young people’s connections to these places. This revolving ownership and focus of such venues in Castlemaine could be a symptom of the town’s ongoing gentrification, however it could also simply indicate the difficulty of running a commercial nightlife venue in a small country town.

Lizzie photographed another of Castlemaine’s pubs – the Cumberland - and her discussion around the reasoning for doing so, focused on the constancy of that venue over time. For Lizzie this particular pub represents a stable, traditional country pub, one that knows its market and has not been gentrified. Even though Lizzie does not really go there herself, she makes a point of sharing her appreciation that this pub is there and an important part of her town. Here she discusses her photograph 3I17:

**Lizzie:** *I’ve always been a bit fascinated by the Cumberland, because it has not changed in my whole life, it’s always been just what it is. Even though I’d never go there I kind of appreciate what it is, because they’re like ‘this is our market, and we’re just gonna keep giving them what they want, we’re not gonna charge too much, we’re not gonna try and be fancy’ and you know, they’ve lasted under the same model of management for the longest time. They haven’t needed to revamp themselves. I kind of appreciate that they’re just constant.*



*Photograph 20 Castlemaine, Lizzy, 3/17*

While pubs arose in a range of photographs and conversations in the photo-elicitation research, the young people interviewed in Castlemaine do not appear to naturally orientate to the pub as a place to hang out, and when they do go there to hang out, they describe a sort of awkward internal tension. Dominic enjoyed the thrill of visiting the pub when he was underage, but describes his current the pub as “so depressing”. Grace also refers to the schism between her ideal of the pub before she turned eighteen and the reality of her experience of visiting it now that she is eighteen.

**Grace:** *Oh, the Bridge was good for a bit and then it got a bit, like gross. I don't know, I think I built up this kind of idea baout what the Bridge was like in my head and then i'd get there and be like “oh there's just a lot of old people here – this isn't as fun as I thought it was” [laughs].*

Alex too describes his photograph of the Railway Hotel [pictured in 3g3 in Appendix B], which he took when visiting a friend who works there.

**Alex:** *Yeah, and also that's in the day time as well, it's like who the hell is in the pub in the daytime as well it's three o'clock in the afternoon, it's kind of depressing.*

For the young research participants from Castlemaine, it appears the pub on its own, is not a substantial attractor, instead, there appeared to be a desire for a different focus of nightlife, predominantly through live music. All of the positive experiences that arose in the interviews which were located at a commercial night time venue were based around seeing live music.

### 6.3.5 Conclusion Castlemaine

This section of this chapter has examined the photo-elicitation findings in Castlemaine. Young people in Castlemaine appear to have a wide range of spaces and places that they engage with positively in the town which they with engage regularly. Cafés appeared repeatedly throughout the photo-elicitation research here and provide a site for young people to connect informally, spontaneously and in a positive social atmosphere. Retail and eateries that were photographed were commonly discussed in regard to a value proposition – this related to avoiding commercialism through consuming second-hand goods, supporting local makers or local family businesses, and also the experience of finding new and interesting things at markets. Even when it causes conflict in the community, the street art discussed and photographed in Castlemaine – often about social and political issues – is generally experienced positively by a range of participants as a means of expression. The final theme discussed here is nightlife venues. Young people appear to have an ambivalent relationship with these venues in Castlemaine, illustrating that they do not quite meet the needs of young people's nightlife expectations.

## 6.4 Concluding discussion

In laying out the findings from the photo-elicitation research, some useful differences have started to emerge in young people's engagement with place in Maryborough and



Castlemaine. The most significant difference is that young people in Castlemaine appear to have a wider range of places that they engage with regularly than young people in Maryborough.

The below table illustrates the number of sites photographed under each category in each case study town.

Table 4  
Types of sites photographed – Maryborough and Castlemaine

Type of place photographed	Number of unique sites photographed per participant	
	Castlemaine	Maryborough
Commercial venue – third space (café, pub)	18	1
Retail and / or eateries	16	5
Aesthetic site (artwork, heritage building, view, streetscape)	23	17
Outdoor off-beat space (bushlands, rural)	12	12
Outdoor town space (parks, gardens, sports)	10	11
Domestic space (including home street)	8	4
Public transport sites	8	2
Institution (school / tafe)	4	5
Public venue third space (library)	3	0

Individual sites were often photographed more than once per participant. For instance, in Maryborough Mark took twelve of his photographs at TAFE, and Greg took sixteen photographs at home. In Castlemaine Dominic took four photographs of Mt Alexander and four photographs of Victory Park. So in order to illustrate the breadth of sites without double counting I have counted each individual site that occurs in each participant's photographs – meaning that particular sites – for instance, the Railway Station in either town – may be counted more than once if they appear numerous participant photographs. The category chosen for the photograph is informed by the content of the photograph but

also, by the interview elicitation. For instance while the Railway Station appeared in photographs by numerous participants in both towns, in Maryborough the reasons for photographing this site were most strongly focused on the heritage building and iconic nature of the site. In Castlemaine, on the other hand, the railway station was photographed by numerous participants but was only discussed as significant in terms of it enabling mobility between Castlemaine, Bendigo and Melbourne. The table above illustrates some significant differences and similarities between the types of spaces valued by young people in Maryborough compared with Castlemaine. The most striking differences are related to the prevalence of commercial third place sites as well as retail and eateries in Castlemaine young people's regular routines. The occurrence of these particular sites in the photographs provide the most prominent difference within the photographic dataset – 34 sites photographed in Castlemaine compared with six in Maryborough. These are indoor spaces within the township zone, which young people value and within which they feel comfortable. Outdoor spaces, both in town and out of town appeared strongly in photographs from both towns, though they tell a different story in each place.

This chapter has provided a broad picture of some of the main photographic themes emerging from the photo-elicitation research. Some groups of photographs have not been discussed here as they will be examined in detail in the following four chapters. For instance, young people in Maryborough photographed the bush and home repeatedly. These are discussed in the following two chapters on boredom and surveillance. Already this chapter has begun to indicate that young people in Castlemaine may experience their home towns with a greater sense of freedom across the whole town space. The following chapter picks up on this and explores young people's experiences of spatial boredom, which arises as a significant theme in Maryborough and less significantly in Castlemaine.

## Chapter 7. “I got nothing to do for fun”: the mundane reality of living in a small town

### 7.1 Prelude

When I prepare to interview Mark, I notice that I am already expecting that he will have little to contribute to my PhD research. As I flip through his photographs I remember why I might be thinking this. It is obvious from his images that he snapped the entire film on the day he was given the disposable camera, at the TAFE site where he studies his senior years VCAL. There are images of his teacher, his friends in the classroom, the hallways, the front gate, a lot of images of the car park, the railway tracks across the car park, a friend flipping-the-bird at the sky, and his feet on the ground. My assumption from this is maybe that he was lazy, or did not want to engage with the task he had been given. I asked him if there was a reason he took all of his photographs at this location and he responds:

**Mark:** *Because [TAFE] makes me happy. It gives me something to do in life. It makes me not so bored.*

**Ember:** *Did you have time off school before coming here? Where you weren't going much – or, what were you doing?*

**Mark:** *I was kicked out of mainstream schooling three months before I finished year 12, and I had nothing to do so I thought why not enrol at tafe or something, so I came and saw [the] Uni and enrolled.*

**Ember:** *Did you have a bit of time in between [school and TAFE]?*

**Mark:** *Yeah.*

**Ember:** *And did you not enjoy that?*

**Mark:** *No. It was just boring sitting at home doing nothing. So I thought, might as well come and do something.*

In his study of young, educationally disaffected men in a small former mining communities in England, Geoffrey Bright argues that school exclusion has “had a major, irreversible, effect in deepening their marginalisation” (Bright, 2010, p. 48). So too, in the case of Mark, perhaps the very small spatial parameters within which he took his photographs reveal the extent of public space in Maryborough in which he does not feel marginalised. The TAFE, he claims, makes him happy, provides him with purpose and “something to do in life”. So now, I ease up, hold back my judgments about how well this participant completed the task. I look again, and listen.

The three photographs on the following page [1b20, 1b14, 1b23], form a sample of those described. The photographs in themselves are not instantly interpretable as illustrating boredom or marginalisation. However, through the interview process, it becomes clear that Mark feels spatially marginalised. This one space, in and around his TAFE campus is where he feels comfortable, purposeful and valuable. Further through the interview process, it becomes clear that there are not many other spaces throughout the town in which he feels comfortable.



Photograph 21 Maryborough, Mark, 1b20



Photograph 22 Maryborough, Mark, 1b14



Photograph 23 Maryborough, Mark, 1b23

In asking him what else he enjoys doing with his time in Maryborough, and what he does for fun, he replies:

**Mark:** *Um... really just talk to my friends. I got nothing to do for fun.*

Harris (2000, cited in Spruyt, Vandenbossche, Keppens, Sioners, & Van Droogen Broeck, 2018, p. 226) argues that young people from significantly economically disadvantaged families are often at odds with leisure time as this is experienced as “having nothing to do”. So too, in the case of Mark, who after being expelled from mainstream school, experienced

this expansive time as boring – just sitting around. The TAFE campus offers him an alternative to that experience. Yet in terms of after-hours leisure time, Mark experiences this as “nothing to do”. Many of the young research participants in both Maryborough and Castlemaine referred to a lack of entertainment for young adults within the town. This is not surprising as it is not a problem specific to Maryborough or Castlemaine but is perhaps felt by young people living in any small town and even in many suburban areas.

## 7.2 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the Maryborough and Castlemaine participants’ varied and sometimes contradictory discussions on feelings of boredom and a perceived lack of entertainment in their home town. In some cases, there was a distinct cognitive awareness of the quietness of the home town contributing to a sense of boredom, or lack of things to do. In other cases, the sense of boredom-related dissatisfaction was eked out more slowly through the photo-elicitation process. Here I argue that young people’s experiences and perceptions of boredom are bound in factors including a [lack of] cognitive awareness of the town, and indeed, what lies beyond the town, as well as in socioeconomic disadvantage. The bulk of this chapter focuses on the fieldwork in Maryborough, as it is where most of the data relating to the theme of spatial boredom arose. A small section on Castlemaine illustrates the very different way in which young people socially construct Castlemaine as boring.

In the first part of this chapter I engage with a range of research on youth leisure boredom, and conceptualisations of boredom in general to set the scene for a theoretical engagement with the photo-elicitation data. Then, from the qualitative data in Maryborough, I unpack a sense of dissatisfaction felt by participants with the range of entertainment options in their home town. While the participants discussing this were mostly over 18, their imaginings of what would make Maryborough more entertaining and fun as a place to spend their leisure time were all focused on daytime leisure activities rather than nightlife venues. Some of the

participants point to discussion of scale, traversability and expectations. Where numerous children and young people's geographers discuss young people's use of the street as a hangout space in both urban and rural village locations, this does not appear to be so much the case in Maryborough. Rather, here young people articulate preferences for engagement in rural leisure pursuits such as four-wheel-driving, motor biking, and hanging out in the bush. The town itself is experienced as having limited potential.

### 7.2.1 Conceptualising boredom

Neulinger (1974, cited in Barnett, 2005) claims that leisure and boredom could not possibly co-exist as the concepts are at odds with each other. However, leisure boredom is taken to be a result of "too much time available, with too little to do to fill that time" (Barnett, 2005, p. 132). In his book *the Philosophy of Boredom* Lars Svensden (2005) attempts to classify four types of boredom. Situative boredom arises from the tedium of a given situation – as it may in waiting for public transport; the "boredom of satiety", occurs when one is so content that everything becomes mundane; creative boredom describes not the reasoning for being bored, but the result – "that one is forced to do something new"; finally, Svensden describes "existential boredom" in which "the soul is without content and the world is in neutral" (Svensden, 2005, p. 42). The main focuses of Svenden's *philosophy of boredom* is the difference between situative and existential boredom. The key distinction between these two forms of boredom, Svensden (2005) writes, "would be to say that while situative boredom contains a longing for something that is desired, existential boredom contains a longing for any desire at all" (p. 42). Understanding boredom is important both as a society and for individuals, as boredom has severe consequences. As young people's leisure time often provides a sphere in which they can experiment with different social identities and social roles, the consequences for persistently high levels of boredom in young people include contributing to social dysfunction (Martz, Schulenberg, Patrick, & Kloska, 2018, p.

669) and inhibited emotional development (Spruyt *et al.*, 2018, p. 226) as well as the use of and addiction to alcohol and drugs (Patterson & Pegg, 1999).

Black (2017) has another way of conceptualising boredom – particularly as it relates to rural life. Writing autobiographically of her own experiences of boredom as a young person growing up in small town, Port Lincoln Western Australia, Black argues that this form of boredom experienced relates to spatial and temporal anticipation. She writes:

Being a child in a country town means being at the crossing point of two vectors of anticipation: one is temporal and universal in that one is anticipating the bigger world of adulthood, and the second is spatial, the anticipation of modern urbanity – the country town is the child of the city. (Black, 2017, para 5)

In other words, boredom caused by *temporal anticipation* is experienced through not yet being old enough to engage in certain activities (for instance, completing school, driving, work, drinking age, autonomous independence), or from waiting for an event or a plan to eventuate. On the other hand, boredom experienced through *spatial anticipation* is, for young people growing up in a small town, bound up in a comparison between the small town and an (imagined or real) other, more urban area (Black, 2017). So spatial anticipation may relate to either the eventual urbanisation of the rural town, or to the relocation of the young person to a bigger place (Black, 2017).

Svensden's (2005) philosophical exploration of boredom and Black's (2017) reflective, autobiographical conceptualisations of boredom provide an interesting grounding for understanding young people's perceptions and experiences of small town boredom in the current study. While there is limited ethnographic or other social research that looks at understanding young people's experiences of leisure boredom, a couple of large quantitative studies have been identified to help provide depth to conceptualising boredom for this chapter. Martz *et al.* (2018) conducted a survey with a sample of over 20,000 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>



graders across America as part of a broader population survey. The survey measured high boredom alongside socio-demographic factors such as school engagement, cultural background, parental education and involvement, urbanity/rurality, friendship groups and extracurricular activities (Martz *et al.*, 2018). The study found that across the board, rural young people were more likely to experience high levels of boredom than urban or suburban young people.

Another a large-scale, cross-regional, mixed-methods study carried out by Spruyt *et al.* (2018) sought to understand the relationship between social capital, economic capital, cultural capital and parental monitoring and teenage leisure-time boredom. The researchers had assumed that higher economic capital would be helpful in reducing teenage boredom, but indeed found no correlation. The highest correlation identified was the relationship between high social capital and reduced experiences of leisure boredom, and between high social capital and higher levels of life satisfaction (Spruyt *et al.*, 2018, p. 235). However, the authors do note that material deprivation does more often than not have negative effects on young people's social capital resources. Therefore, it remains likely that there is indeed a relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage in young people and their lived experience of boredom. The (2018) study identified very little correlation between a young person's cultural capital and boredom. However, the method of assessing cultural capital could be critiqued as being framed by too mature and traditional means. Cultural capital was assessed in the study by the following measures: "the parents' highest diploma, the number of books at home, the adolescent's frequency of reading a book for recreational purposes, and the number of cultural activities (theatre, museum, literary events ...)" (Spruyt *et al.*, 2018, p. 234). Surely young people's cultural capital would include a broader range of goods and activities than described above? This could include a broader array of capital such as technology and media, fashion, subcultural items and activities such as skateboarding or BMX riding, listening to and participating in making music or attending live music events. The

breadth of young people's cultural capital identified in the previous chapter of this thesis demonstrates the benefits of a qualitative study to identify the relationship between young people's cultural capital and their sense of leisure boredom related to their home towns.

Bright's (2010) long term ethnographic study of young disaffected people in former coal mining villages in northern England also provides insight into rural young people's leisure boredom. Bright (2010) argues that young, educationally disaffected people in these places also suffer for a near complete lack of social and cultural capital. Bright specifically investigates the connection between mining strikes and coal pit closures, and the intergenerational haunting impact it had. However, he also describes young people's marginalisation and a form "systemic post-traumatic malaise" (2010, p. 47) that seems comparable to Svensden's (2005) description of *existential boredom*. Svensden (2005) argues that while situative boredom often occurs when people either can't engage with their preferred activity or they have to carry out an activity they do not want to do (p. 19). But, he asks "what about when we have no idea of what we want to do, when we have lost the capacity to get our bearing in life?" (Svensden, 2005, p. 19). This form of boredom is profound and important to address, as it resembles a reduced motivation "because the will cannot get a grip anywhere" (Svensden, 2005, p. 19). Thus, deep levels of existential boredom, or the malaise that Bright (2010, p. 47) describes are likely to impact young people's envisioning of the future. As Prince (2014) writes, "place-based experiences, such as belonging, aversion, and entrapment, may be internalized and encoded into possible selves, thus producing emplaced future self-concept" (p. 698).

While boredom can be a normal part of life, and in some instances result in creativity, different levels of boredom can have different impacts on young people. This chapter now moves to examine the empirical findings from the photo-elicitation research to understand the ways in which young people socially construct their home town as boring.

### 7.3 Perceptions and experiences of boredom in Maryborough

Most of the research participants from Maryborough expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with their hometown caused by a lack of entertainment available there. These young people have constructed the space of their home town as deficient, and not meeting their needs. It appears that this deficiency perceived by young people in Maryborough relates to the spatial scale of the town – as the town itself it is neither rural nor suburban. It constitutes a “strange sort of place” (Nina), and is constructed as at once too small and too large, with enough to entertain little kids but nothing for teenagers. These participants typically express a desire for entertainment that is somewhat physical and youthful, and often forms of engagement that occur in suburban or peri-urban places such as paintball, go karts, arcades, speedway, paint ball, ten pin bowling or mini golf, as well as commercial retail.

Experiences of boredom and perceptions of the hometown as boring were fairly widespread among the research participants in Maryborough. This section begins with an examination of the different ways in which the young people in Maryborough construct or perceive the place as lacking – especially in regard to hosting spaces for structured entertainment. The section then evolves into a discussion regarding forms of preferred spatial engagement – which includes examination of what participants do in their leisure time to avoid boredom as well as what they envision to be entertaining outside of spatial constraints.

In general, I found it surprising that not many participants in Maryborough discussed night life or lack of night life as being a factor in their satisfaction with living in the town. In some ways I found it personally surprising to see a general naivety in the research participants, evidenced by a desire for fairly juvenile and all-ages activities such as mini golf, dodgem cars, video games, or cubby house building. Given that most of the participants were over 18, and the stark socioeconomic indicators of Maryborough, my own prejudices led me to expect that the participants would have a stronger predilection for drinking, drugs and risky

behaviour to escape the existential reality of their lives. This was not the case on the whole. The majority of participants either did not mention drugs or alcohol or mentioned it as either a negatively perceived thing that other people do.

Jacki lives in the smaller, neighbouring town of Dunolly and experiences a strong sense of place attachment there, however she feels that Maryborough lacks entertainment for young adults. While Jacki intends to stay in her neighbouring small home town of Dunolly for the near future, she can see that having a lack of entertainment for young people in Maryborough contributes to a desire to leave the town.

*Jacki: But I think [Maryborough] just being small can be a bit boring for some people. And there's not many things for young kids to do – like, my age. For little kids there's a park and maybe the pool, but it would be good if they got something like an arcade place or just something for young [people] to do because they don't really have anything for us. And it sucks, because well, being younger – like being a kid it's much fun, 'cause there's parks and things like that – but when you're older, nah – you just want to leave. You don't want to be here.*

In Jacki, 20, referring to herself as a “young kid”, she is demonstrating that her constructed sense of self remains outside adulthood. She situates herself, and presumably her friends, demographically in-between children and adults. There is perhaps a sense of expectation that the town of Maryborough ought to make provisions for young people in this liminal zone, but it doesn't. In turn, feelings boredom or frustration with the town arise as a place which doesn't “really have anything for us”. The implication of this is that the town is failing to meet young people's expectations of place engagement. The sense of boredom Jacki associates with Maryborough is directly attributed to the place, and the smallness of the town. This then negatively affects place attachment, causing a desire for young people to leave the town.

Young people's construction of the town as lacking in Maryborough has a range of perceived effects. Similarly to Jacki, Nina constructs the town to be lacking in spaces and activities for young people, indicating there is a gap between spatial expectations and spatial reality. For Nina the negative impacts of this is not just that young people want to leave the town, but rather that may be driven to risky behaviour – such as smoking and drinking – in order to alleviate boredom.

*Nina: But it's also really, like, boring – in all honesty – here as well. Because there's not much to do. We've got the parks which are mainly for the kids, but we've got very few areas for teenagers. Which could be quite a bit [as] to why kids have started taking up smoking and alcohol consumption. That could also be a major part. 'Cause, if you ask any of the Maryborough kids, they would say it's a hole. It's gotten a reputation as the kids think. But when it gets asked about it becomes quite a hard question to answer, because you don't know what to put in it. But like, yeah, it's ... it's a strange sort of place.*

Here both Nina and Jacki reveal that their own social construction of the town as boring arises not only from their own experience, but is also bound up in their perceptions of other young people's discourses and experiences of the town.

Many of the participant reflections on home-town boredom in Maryborough centre on the town being too small to afford an engaging range of structured entertainment venues and activities. However, interestingly a range of participants also opt to spend their time in either smaller rural villages or more open rural areas and bushlands, and this form of spending leisure time is described as non-boring. In fact, it appears to be a direct form of resistance to two things. First, in choosing to spend leisure time outside of the town, young people are resisting the spatial containment of the small town as it is constructed as boring. But second, my data suggests that they are also resisting the heavy forms of community

spatial surveillance that they perceive to exist within the town. This second form of resistance will be discussed in depth in the following chapter. This indicates that the population size of a town is not necessarily a predictor of how much boredom will be experienced by young people there. For instance, here are three responses to my questions of what the participants enjoy doing most with their social leisure time:

**Greg:** *...just cruising in the bush.*

**Megan:** *...going out to bushes and going motorbike riding...*

**Karl:** *...I'll probably go out for a drive and meet up with a few people. Either that or I'd just go out for a play in the mud or out shooting or something.*

These rural forms of spatial engagement are open-ended, social and visceral. It appears more rural or village spaces are not subject to the same level of expectations by young people as the bigger town of Maryborough, and so are less likely to arouse a response of boredom. But not only that, these more rural places also allow for a deeper engagement with, and awareness of space. As discussed above, Jacki is frustrated with Maryborough being home to limited entertainment options. She lives in the neighbouring, much smaller village of Dunolly but travels to Maryborough for VCAL study and work. Dunolly itself has considerably less in terms of structured entertainment and leisure activities and spaces than Maryborough. However, Jacki does not describe any dissatisfaction with Dunolly itself. Jacki's perception of Dunolly is burdened with less expectations about entertainment and leisure time. In discussing her preference for Dunolly over Maryborough, Jacki refers to the sense of quiet and the accessibility to the natural environment as positive features of place. Jacki's home in Dunolly provides a haven she speaks passionately about, from which historic buildings and bush-scapes are all accessible on foot. In discussing the photograph 1k4 pictured below, taken of a church nearby Jacki's home, she states "so we always see this lovely church and the sun shines and it looks amazing". While for Jacki, Maryborough is

constructed as lacking and deficient, in Dunolly, there's an open and aware appreciation of the aesthetic spaces around her. Furthermore, Jacki never ascribes boredom to her hometown of Dunolly, indicating that the space is taken as it is, without being subject to spatial expectations that are at odds with the physical and social dimensions of the place.

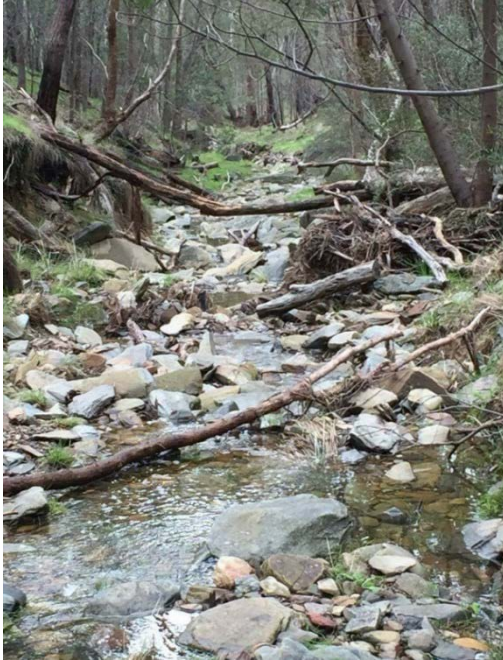


*Photograph 24 Maryborough, Jacki, 1k4*

Similarly, Tessa also appears to positively engage with space outside of the town space of Maryborough. While she verbalises a positive relationship with her home town, her photographs and discussions largely centre on bushland spaces more than any town space (except for big events as discussed in the previous chapter). Here Tessa describes her photographs of Avoca Falls [photographs 1L2 – 1L6] where she visits frequently with her family.

**Tessa:** *It's really pretty, it's good and sometimes in the winter it's nice – it just depends if it's too cold or raining. 'Cause the water is actually flowing. In the summer it doesn't actually flow that much, because the water just dries up.*

When I asked her to expand on what she liked about going to Avoca Falls, Tessa refers to the quietude and seasonal differences that are apparent in going to the bush.



*Photograph 25 Maryborough, Tessa, 115*



*Photograph 26 Maryborough, Tessa, 116*

**Tessa:** *Yeah, yeah I like being out in the bush, because we used to like living in a bushy kind of part, so I like it out there, it's nicer, quieter, there's much more to see. Yeah, it's different all the time, like different things are there, things happen.*

**Ember:** *Like what kind of things?*

**Tessa:** *Like maybe there's a storm a tree blows down, it makes it look different.*

Tessa refers to the bush offering less to hear but more to see than in her town – so perhaps the quietude of the bush allows for a stronger engagement with the other senses thus a heightened awareness of seasonal changes. The difference or changes that she refers to in the bush is perhaps noticed in contrast to the constancy of the town of Maryborough.

Sara initially discusses her dissatisfaction with Maryborough as intertwined with the small scale of the place – the town being too small to host a range of commercial leisure



entertainment activities and venues. However, Sara also describes Maryborough as being too large to explore on foot – and in this sense, the largeness of the town also contributes to a sense of spatial boredom. Because of the lack of foot-based traversability experienced in Maryborough, Sara prefers instead to spend time at the nearby smaller towns of Carisbrook and Clunes (the hometowns of two of her good friends) as they are easily walkable. In discussing her preference for spending time in smaller towns over Maryborough, Sara suggests “we’d find better things to do, ‘cause it has the creek and um, you can kind of just go off and find things to do I guess”. Several of Sara’s photographs consist of images of such rural spaces and villages that she enjoys spending time in. In discussing her photograph 1i4, pictured below, a photograph of a road leading to a bridge over the creek in Carisbrook she refers to the isolation being a valuable attraction, as well as the space of the natural environment.

**Sara:** *And whenever I’m in Carisbrook, that’s wherever we go - we just go down to the creek, and like we have picnics down there and um. Cos there’s like - have you been to the Carisbrook Creek before?*

**Ember:** *No, I’ve only driven through Carisbrook before.*

**Sara:** *OK, yeah, there’s like a bridge and then like you can go down under the bridge and sit down there and it’s really isolated and like no one can see you kind of thing, so like, we go down there. And then there’s been a few time’s we’ve gone camping down there, just in the summer. We have a lot of good time down at the Carisbrook creek, ‘cause it’s kind of away from people as well. And then you can swim down there in the summer.*



*Photograph 27 Maryborough, Sara, 1i4*

Throughout the interview Sara discusses finding numerous private spaces to spend time with her friends: by creeks, in bushlands, under bridges, in abandoned buildings. So again, as with Jacki, the scale of the space in Maryborough becomes problematic when compared with neighbouring much smaller towns and rural areas. Maryborough is large enough that there is a perception that it should cater for entertainment needs in terms of structured venues, destinations and activities. But, in smaller towns such as Dunolly, Carisbrook and Clunes, the space is experienced as traversable and more rural so that young people can “just go off and find things to do” (Sara). That is, they can explore landscapes and bushscapes, and historic buildings or streetscapes on foot and without any unmet expectations about structured leisure spaces.

As discussed in the following chapter, privacy appears to be a significant driver guiding young people’s preferences to spend leisure time outside of the town space of Maryborough – to access spaces that young people can interact, perform and play outside of the well-

meaning eye of community surveillance. These more rural and smaller town spaces are experienced intimately, privately and provide a space for imaginative and creative play.

The findings here regarding spatial scales resonates with Michael Leyshon's (2008) study of place and identity formation in rural UK young people. In the study Leyshon looks young people from rural farmlands and small villages north of London. He writes of the lack of structured entertainment in these spaces, "for some young people this is a challenge to be overcome... rural youth therefore see themselves as imaginative and inventive problem solvers" (Leyshon, 2008, p. 14). Whereas Maryborough is socially constructed as lacking in entertainment, other rural, bush and village spaces outside of the town space of Maryborough are not constructed as deficient but rather, provide a space for a more imaginative, visceral and autonomous engagement with space.

So far I have discussed young people's social constructions of Maryborough the town as a boring place, lacking in attractions for young adults, and examined young people's actual preferred forms of engagement that help to alleviate the sense of boredom they ascribe to the home town. A further aspect worth examining when assessing the spatial scales in relation to the topic of boredom, is what would young people envisage would make the town more entertaining? What forms of leisure entertainment would they prefer to engage with, if they weren't spatially constricted? When quizzed about what they would bring to Maryborough to make the place more fun to hang out, the participants frequently referred to more suburban or peri-urban, structured and commercial activities such as go karts, speedway, paintball, or minigolf. Where retail and cafés emerged significantly in Castlemaine, shops and cafés were only referred to a couple of times in discussions of what was lacking from the town. In further articulating what she would bring to Maryborough for the entertainment of her and her friends, Sara describes a space which appears to be a public imagining of a typically suburban, private and non-commercial space:

**Sara:** *A big, just a big shed which was full of games, and like had a pool table, and like a table tennis table and had like a spa in it too, like just a big shed that kids could go just to hang out and socialise.*

This space Sara envisions suggests an expansion of a domestic leisure sphere – perhaps of her own home or friends’ back yard sheds – in which she feels comfortable and entertained. Even when suggesting a nightclub, Bobby gives further detail about what this would entail and this typically urban form of commercial entertainment, similarly to Sara, this vision begins to resemble a backyard shed:

**Bobby:** *I would actually recommend like a kind of an underage um, nightclub kind of thing. For people under eighteen. Um, you know obviously no alcohol and stuff like that and its patrolled ... cos it would knock out kids getting up to mischief and, you know, instead of spending the night getting absolutely wasted, you could go to a place, just chill out have a couple of laughs, play a game of pool or darts or something you know, and just hang out.*

So what is initially labelled a nightclub, is envisioned by Bobby (who is not underage himself) to be more of an underage hangout space, and as with Sara’s envisioning, akin to a well kitted-out suburban shed. Further participants also proposed quite suburban or peri-urban activities for what they envisioned would make Maryborough a better place to hang out with their friends as indicated in the quotes below:

**Karl:** *I would say a burnout pad and a paintball arena. Or an archery tag... Yeah. More activities to get you outside, socialising with everyone.*

**Megan:** *Something to do with speed.*

**Greg:** *I guess like, Mildura had a lot of theme type parks like bumper cars and roller skating and that type of thing. And like putt-putt and that.*

**Nina:** *Um, I reckon getting a wave pool here would be cool.*

So, the experience of the scale of place is very interesting in Maryborough as young people construct their home town as deficiently sitting between their preferred actual leisure (rural) spaces and their envisioned (suburban/peri-urban) leisure spaces. Maryborough itself then, as a small town is socially constructed as an in-between zone, not figuring largely in the expectations of young people. The diagram below illustrates different spatial forms in this discussion.

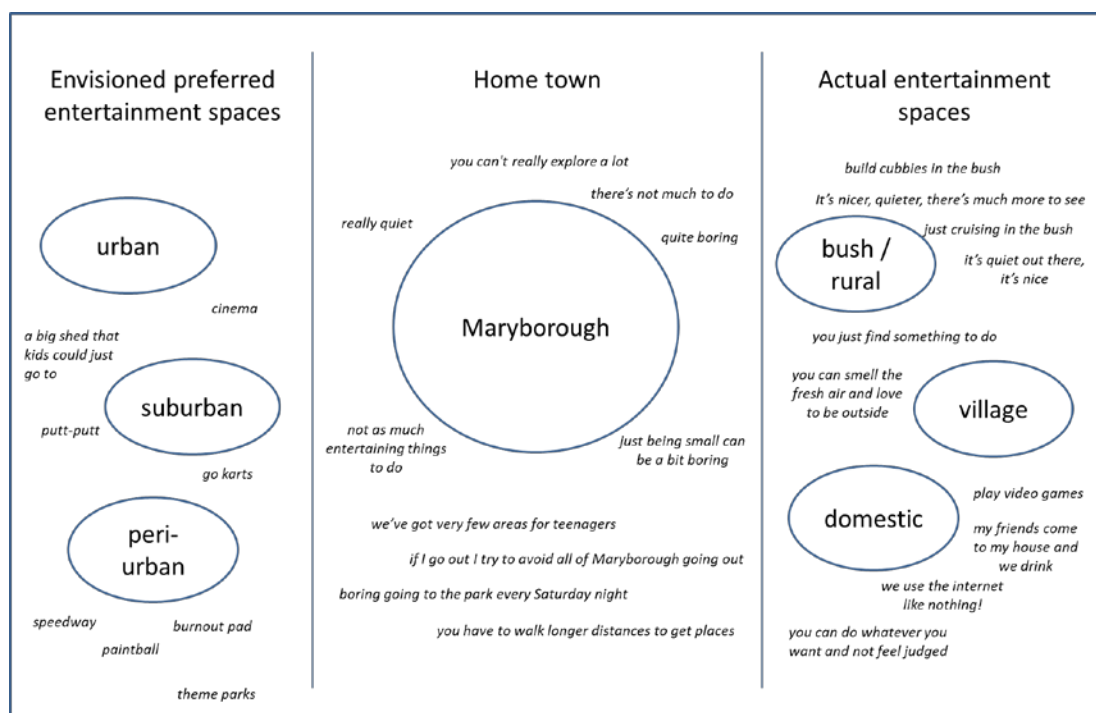


Figure 15 Spatial scales of engagement – actual and envisioned, Maryborough

The small town is too small to cater for the envisioned preferred structured entertainment found in suburbs and peri-urban areas, but it is too big to traverse on foot, and too populated to explore imaginatively and autonomously. The descriptions of what is lacking from Maryborough relate mostly to commercial, structured entertainment venues. There is an expectation in Maryborough – because it is constructed in the minds of young people as almost suburban, that there will exist a provision of these types of entertainment. This expectation is not met and so a sense of frustration and boredom arises. Whereas in a

village, a rural area, or bush lands, the geographical form is accepted without further expectations, so attracting a different form of expectation or agency. Boredom in these places is less likely to be experienced as they are experienced and engaged with aesthetically, physically, socially and imaginatively.

### 7.3.1 From spatial expectations to spatial agency?

Corrigan (1975) articulates that the concept of 'doing nothing' on the street, for young people is actually an active agentic pursuit full of creativity and liveliness. The street, in this case, is what Aitken (2001) refers to as "spaces of unmitigated potential, creativity and imagination" (p. 177). In referring to a young person discussing throwing milk bottles as a "weird idea", Corrigan writes:

It is the 'weird idea' that represents the major something in 'doing nothing'. In fighting boredom the kids do not choose the street as a wonderfully lively place, rather they look on it as the place where there is the most chance that something will happen. (Corrigan, 1975, p. 104)

For Corrigan (1975, p. 104), these "weird ideas" that play out in the free space of the street, are derived through young people's boredom but also have the potential to alleviate boredom.

Tanja Joelsson (2015a) conducted an ethnographic study of "Volvo greasers" – a subcultural community of young people focused on modifying and driving cars in a peri-urban area of Sweden. Joelsson argues that while the greasers often refer to being affected by spatial boredom, they are indeed "active agents", the boredom is in a way, inflicted upon them (by a lack of available activities and venues) and they then use their agency to alleviate boredom (p. 1260). Joelsson (2015a) writes:

‘Doing nothing’ slips into the realm of unwanted boredom when the young people perceive that they do not have the opportunity to choose what they do, or where and when they do it. In other words, *boredom appears to be highly entangled with an experience of agency*. (p. 1260, emphasis in original)

In other words, the ability to alleviate boredom occurs through an experienced sense of agency. Joelsson argues that the greasers perform hanging out, doing nothing as a group in a supermarket car park as a means of alleviating boredom – but that this form of young people congregating and spending time is viewed by the wider community as unproductive and negative behaviour. While Corrigan’s (1975), Joelsson’s (2015a) and other ethnographic and geographic studies (for instance, Matthews, Limb, *et al.*, 2000; Skelton, 2000) have examined the street and other public spaces as sites in which young people can experience most agency to alleviate their boredom, this does not seem to be so much the case in Maryborough. In regard to my case study in Maryborough, it is likely that young people are constructing the town as spatially boring or lacking due to issues perceived with the closeness of the community. Young people’s experiences of this double-edged nature of the close community is explored in-depth in the following chapter. The preferred forms of activity engaged in regularly in the bush, in villages or rural areas such as “just cruising” and “just hanging around”, would likely be construed by concerned community members as unconstructive and problematic adolescent behaviour.

As noted, several participants were quick to construct the town as lacking and deficient of sanctioned activities in which young people can “hang” legitimately in public space without being perceived as deviant or problematic. Hence, when discussing what types of spaces or activities would make the town a more fun place to hang out with friends – the participants mostly refer to sanctioned commercial spatial activities – often types located on the peri-urban fringe such as go karts, paintball or a speedway. These are spaces in which young people have an assumed legitimacy and are not at odds with the intended socially produced

nature of the place. Other participants envision a more public re-construction of a typically private / suburban space – “just a big shed”. These forms of space are likely to be public imaginings of private worlds in which the participants feel at ease “hanging out”, and where young people are accepted and acceptable.

In most cases, among my participants, this results in them and their friends avoiding the space of the town in their leisure time, with the exception of a few occasional activities described such as clothes shopping or “going for coffees”. The main exception to this trend is Karl, who, while he prefers to spend his leisure time in bush and rural spaces, also refuses to conform to social control within the town space. When I ask Karl if he likes living in Maryborough he replies that he does “on the odd occasion”. I ask him to expand on this and he refers to a sense of boredom that he experiences due to a lack of social engagement, presumably among young people in the town:

**Karl:** *You get boring. And everyone's like, either into drugs or just like very antisocial. If they are social, it's more – “let's go drink” and that's about it.*

**Ember:** *Yeah? So um, what do you think makes them antisocial?*

**Karl:** *Like, they're more stuck into the technology and shit like that now. Instead of actually going out and seeing people and doing things, they more just sit at home on their phones and shit like that.*

**Ember:** *On social media, or?*

**Karl:** *Yeah.*

Behaviour such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs or excessive use of IT devices are all at odds with Karl's social needs which are adventurous and masculine. The prevalence of the activities described here by Karl are experienced as a threat to his social capital. So in this case, the space of Maryborough itself is not described as deficient or boring. Instead, the



young people within the space are known to behave in a way that Karl perceives as boring. While many of the participants in the study experience higher levels of agency to alleviate spatial boredom outside of the town space, Karl along with Bobby and Lola were less focused on boredom in their discussions of the town sphere, and all exhibit higher levels of agency to alleviate spatial boredom within the town itself. This is reflected in the previous chapter through Bobby's alternative and imaginative use of the skate park and Lola's playful social use of a neighbourhood park. Karl, on the other hand, exhibits a different form of agency within the town sphere, one that is more overtly rebellious, as demonstrated here:

**Ember:** *When you say you like living in Maryborough on occasions, what are those occasions?*

**Karl:** *Um... when I've got a few friends down and we can go out and go motorbike riding or four wheel driving or something. Be able to actually get out of town for a bit. Then have a few things to do in town. Cause a lot of mischief.*

**Ember:** *Yeah, what kind of mischief?*

**Karl:** *Ah, just annoying everybody. Like normal. Like always. Driving up and down the main street covered in mud. Good fun.*

**Ember:** *Yeah? And that's annoying to people?*

**Karl:** *Yep. They don't like it when me car gets muddy. Especially the police. "You can't have a dirty car" [nagging tone], apparently.*

The correlation between having fun for Karl, and annoying people, demonstrates that his spatial and cultural expectations are at odds with the town. The fact that he recognises this behaviour as mischievous but also continues to do it, and that the whole experience is "good fun" illustrates that part of the fun is experienced through the potential for conflict and police attention. In the same way that Joelsson (2015b) describes the Volvo greasers gaining

immense social capital through vehicular risk-taking, Karl too perhaps gains social capital amongst his peers through “causing mischief”. While all he claims to be doing is driving up and down the street in a muddy car, the potential for interactions with police make this a risky business. Like Dave, in Corrigan's (1975) study, who, when hanging around likes to “cause a bit of mischief on the streets” (p. 104), Karl too, equates causing a bit of mischief with entertainment - he explicitly states that during these times is when he finds Maryborough less boring. Karl's idea of fun, driving around town with a dirty car after four-wheel driving off-road, is obviously not appreciated by locals, including police officers – he later describes being fined for having a too dirty vehicle. While Karl indicates that he gets frustrated that something such as having a dirty car causes annoyance amongst his local police force and town's people, he also finds enjoyment in this activity and likely in the fuss it creates. For Karl, causing “mischief” is part of what he enjoys about living in the town. In some ways this maps onto what Valentine (2004) describes as “forms of non-adherence to order on the street” which becomes (both intentionally and unintentionally) “a form of resistance to adult power” (p. 85). A key difference is that the resistance occurs only from within Karl's car – while he does risk being confronted by police, he is also in some senses inhabiting the private space of his car, rather than truly public space.

This chapter now goes on to discuss the theme of boredom as it arose in very different ways in the photo-elicitation fieldwork in Castlemaine.

#### 7.4 Urbane expectations in Castlemaine

On the whole, the issue of spatial boredom arose as a theme more strongly in Maryborough rather than in Castlemaine. In fact, some of the young people in Castlemaine described actively not finding the town boring. For Grace, this relates quite strongly to her age. She discusses having found the town boring in her earlier teenage years, but now that she is 18 and experiences the privileges of her age such as driving and purchasing alcohol, the town

affords her more opportunities to alleviate boredom. This relates directly to Black's (2017) description of temporal anticipation, and in this case Grace's temporal anticipation has been met.

**Grace:** *Yeah, the prices of the supermarket [laughs] yeah it's expensive. And I don't know. I don't think there's any bad things about living in a small town but sometimes I think, like especially in Year 10 and 11 I'd get frustrated and be like "aaah I want to get out of Castlemaine it's so boring". But like, I think it was just one of those teenage stages, but because I really like it now, and like, but I've spent a lot of time here.*

Likewise, Julia doesn't ascribe her home town as boring. She gives a picture of always having something to do.

**Julia:** *Like with a combination of me just hanging out, like either making art or cooking or just watching something on my own, there's that kind of thing, there's friends, there's jobs, there's doing something with my parents – sometimes we go away – and there's going to Melbourne. It just sort of all meshes together and I'm busy and it's good. Like I don't feel like there's any real gap.*

The research in Maryborough has elicited that the places where young people are least likely to feel bored, and have a stronger sense of spatial agency are outside of the town space – either in rural, bush land, village or domestic settings. On the other hand, in Castlemaine, young people appear to have a greater sense of agency within public spaces of the town as well. This is evidenced by the range of places described in the previous chapter, including cafes, pubs, retail stores, public parks and bushland settings.

For two research participants in Castlemaine, Naomi and Bodhi, boredom was captured intentionally and reflexively in the photographic process. The isolation depicted in Sara's photograph of Carisbrook [pictured photograph in 1i4, discussed in the previous section of

this chapter], is described in wholly positive terms. However, in Castlemaine, both Naomi and Bodhi describe isolation within the town sphere of Castlemaine as a significant detractor to place affection. Nightlife arose as a topic in a range of Castlemaine participant's interviews and/or photographs. For Bodhi and Naomi who are both underage, nightlife is perceived as something that is significantly lacking from the town. They both took photographs of deserted streets in order to convey the emptiness they feel in town, and the lack of nightlife. For Sara in Maryborough, the emptiness photographed in 1i4 represents a sense of creative freedom in leisure time. However, within the bounds of town in Castlemaine, a similar depiction of isolation – [Naomi's photograph 3h12 pictured below] is experienced as limiting, constricting for not allowing new experiences.



*Photograph 28 Castlemaine, Naomi, 3h12*

**Naomi:** *Nothing changes really. That's probably what I mean. Yeah, so that photo [3h12] was just about that abandonedness, just empty streets. Especially, I did want to take a photo at night time but I didn't get the opportunity. But it can be very quiet*

*at night. So, it would be good if we had a bit more nightlife around here. Yeah, it can just be a bit empty really.*

**Ember:** *Yeah. And so, that emptiness is not a good thing for you?*

**Naomi:** *No. Oh it depends on your mood I guess, but it can just be a bit like nothing happens, you just want to see something new or do something new. So yeah, that's probably what it's about really.*

Naomi's sense of dissatisfaction with her home town involves both boredom felt through both spatial anticipation expressed through the desire to "see something new" and temporal anticipation, expressed through the desire to "do something new". Naomi expresses a desire for more nightlife, indicating a preference for a busier, more urban space.

Bodhi also photographed an empty streetscape in Castlemaine with the explicit intention to articulate a sense of dissatisfaction felt in relation to the quietness of town. For Bodhi, this perception of emptiness is clearly articulated as negatively affecting his feelings of town pride. Here he discusses his photograph [pictured below in 3n13].

**Bodhi:** *just a photo of a Castlemaine which, is one of the photos of a place that I'm not as proud of. One thing that I guess about Castlemaine is, um, the empty – like on Saturday nights, Friday nights the night life in Castlemaine isn't very interesting. And I kind of tried to show that by taking a photo, there's no people, a couple of cars, I think this one is on a Saturday night, which is kind of just showing even on a Saturday night, when you'd think everyone would be out, it's just empty and dead. That's a thing I'm not really as proud of in Castlemaine.*



*Photograph 30 Castlemaine, Bodhi, 3n13*

Bodhi's sense of dissatisfaction with the town for its emptiness is articulated purely in spatial terms – it is about what the space lacks, rather than what he, as an underage young person, is allowed to access. He does not express his dissatisfaction in terms of wanting to enter the world of adults, but even on behalf of adults.

**Bodhi:** *I mean like when I took this photo I wasn't just thinking of what I do, I know it's about my perception, but the perception here is that maybe the adults don't have as much to do, or it's just empty at night. It would be interesting to see Castlemaine to have a bit more of something going on a Saturday night.*

**Ember:** *And among your peer group and teenagers, do you see any boredom or kind of drinking in parks or, whatever, because there's not somewhere else to go?*

**Bodhi:** *I don't know, like I don't know how to answer that question. There's not really a whole lot for teenagers to do, so maybe there is some that go out and drink because that's what they might see as their nightlife.*

**Ember:** *So does that happen much in your social group?*

**Bodhi:** *A little bit, but not really. A lot of people – that's why they might think occasionally that Castlemaine's boring because they want to go out more and somewhere in Melbourne they might want to get something like a fake ID and see if they can go clubbing and stuff like that. But in Castlemaine there's not really that opportunity. There's no clubs or anything.*

Again – the focus is simply about the smallness and quietness of the place – the limited range of options, not about being excluded from an adult world. Whilst Bodhi deflects the question about whether he and his friends get bored and participate in illicit drinking, there is an ease and comfort in which he discusses people in his social group acquiring fake IDs so they can go nightclubbing in Melbourne. So regardless of whether Bodhi partakes in this himself, age is not perceived as a barrier to accessing this form of entertainment. In this sense, Castlemaine is socially constructed as a near-urban place, and contrasted directly with central Melbourne, thus the small town comes to be seen as relatively deficient.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that spatial boredom features prominently in the way that young people socially construct their town space in Maryborough. In general, spaces in which young people in Maryborough feel at ease to be active agents in alleviating their own boredom are mostly domestic or bush/rural spaces where this can be done privately and autonomously among friends. This preference ties in strongly to the following chapter, which illustrates the ways in which – especially in Maryborough – young people experience the close nature of a small town community as double-edged. The small town offers friendliness and community support, but is also overly-surveilling of young people, resulting in a lack of privacy and gossip/reputation spreading. It is highly likely that this inhibits young people's sense of freedom or desire within the town space to actively work towards

alleviating their own boredom in playful and imaginative ways as they do in private bush settings and domestic spaces. Instead, young people in Maryborough see their town as lacking in structured, commercial forms of spatial entertainment, in which they can be seen to be hanging out legitimately. Over all there was significantly less agency described by young people to alleviate their own boredom within the town setting. There were very few exceptions to this. One particular example stood out, in which for Karl actively “causing mischief” becomes the principal tactic to alleviate boredom.

The experience of spatial boredom in Castlemaine was altogether quite different from that in Maryborough. Boredom arose much more rarely in Castlemaine and so makes up a smaller segment of this chapter. However, where it did arise, boredom was presented actively and analytically by the participants as they photographed isolated streets in Castlemaine to illustrate to me how quiet and thus boring the town was. Interestingly, the main concern of these participants was the lack of nightlife present in their home town, and yet they were underage. Nonetheless these participants expressed enough agency and awareness of their town that their age wasn't so much considered to be the problem in contributing to their experiences of spatial boredom, rather the lack of urban-style entertainment venues such as nightclubs and live music venues, as well as the small number of people out was, for them what contributed most strongly to their experience of spatial boredom.

Here we begin to see how the socially produced nature of the small town impacts the young person's experiences of spatial and social boredom within the town. Maryborough is socially produced as a regional service and retail centre with strong community and social ties, young people appear to feel constricted and have a very limited sense of personal agency to alleviate boredom within the town space. In Maryborough, young people's agency increases in both the domestic sphere and outside the bounds of town. Castlemaine, on the other hand, is socially produced as a gentrified, urbane, tree-changing town, perhaps with a looser



sense of community, in which young people are less likely to ascribe spatial and social boredom. In the cases in which spatial boredom arises in young people's social constructions of Castlemaine, it is clear that this is caused by an anticipation of urban spatial form, rather than by reduced agency. In examining young people's experiences and perceptions of privacy and surveillance in their home town, the following chapter builds on the work of this chapter, arguing that the close nature of community in Maryborough is experienced as limiting spatial independence and agency.

## Chapter 8. Looking out from the fishbowl: Privacy and surveillance

### 8.1 Introduction

There is a growing body of research that examines the social impacts of a lack of privacy in rural areas and small towns, both in general, and particularly as it relates to young people. For instance, in their study of young people's use of space in small towns in Britain, Matthews *et al.* (2000) explore young people's experiences of being observed in public spaces around town as well as having adults frequently interrupting them "in order to (re)impose control and order" (p. 146). Similarly, Tracey Skelton's (2000) study of teenage girls' use of public space in two small towns in South Wales, identifies that when girls were hanging out in public space, they were often under observation and frequently moved on with threats of police being called. In deconstructing the mythology of young rural people having free and easy access to un-surveilled spaces, Leyshon (2011) notes that "young people reported that they were often victims of the adult gaze and its consequent gossip" (p. 311).

Sibley (1995) argues that teenagers can be seen as occupying a liminal zone or ambiguous territory, and further states that liminality often creates as a source of anxiety within our society (p. 34). Adolescents occupy the liminal/boundary zone between child and adult and thus often appear either simply out of place, or a threat to spatial order (Sibley, 1995, p. 35). While ageing is naturally continuous, adolescence presents itself as a period in which access to space is interrupted and murky – teenagers are viewed as out-of-place in children's public spaces such as playgrounds, but also in adults' third spaces such as licensed venues (Sibley, 1995). The freedom, ability and legitimacy of young people to access to certain spaces, sites or activities, is muddied further by the manner in which different levels of autonomy, freedoms and rights are bestowed progressively between the ages of 16 and 25 (such as driving, voting, medical autonomy, drinking, financial independence for access to student

allowances) (Collins & Kearns, 2001, p. 392). Collins and Kearns (2001) argue in this sense, “the law appears to reinforce the uncertainties surrounding terms such as ‘child’ and ‘youth’, which do not have geographically fixed definitions” (p. 392).

Exploring the British youth subcultures Mods and Rockers in the 1970s, Stanley Cohen’s (1973) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* examines the ways in which legal responses to these groups of young people congregating in public space were escalated through the burgeoning of a moral panic. A moral panic is described as when:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. (Cohen, 1973, p. 1)

Cohen’s seminal piece is commonly cited by children and young people’s geographers as an historical grounding point for assessing the ways in which moral panics have evolved and revolved around teenagers – and have been employed to regulate space (for example, see Collins & Kearns, 2001; Matthews, Limb, *et al.*, 2000; Valentine, 2004; Valentine *et al.*, 2008). Several children’s geographers have examined how this fear or moral panic has resulted in the adult regulation and control of space, either through its privatisation and commodification (Hill & Bessant, 1999; Sibley, 1995; Valentine, 2004), police surveillance (Skelton, 2000; Valentine, 2004) or other regulatory measures such as curfews (Collins & Kearns, 2001), police surveillance and CCTV (Wood, 2016) and legislation such as Anti-Social Behavioural Orders (ASBOs) in the UK (Brown, 2013). Significantly, Skelton (2000) and Valentine (2004) have both demonstrated the various ways in which contemporary western

public space is often not truly public. When it comes to young people who inhabit this awkward liminal zone – adults are likely to impose spatial, temporal, and behavioural restrictions onto the use of public space.

Much of the photographic content in this chapter reveals the importance of bushlands surrounding town in these young people's regular lives – their "place to go" (T. Hall *et al.*, 1999, p. 506). Initially I found this slightly frustrating as I saw these spaces as outside of my unit of study, the small town – I was errantly keen to see places and hear stories about these young people's engagements within what I thought were bounds of their home town. However, this aspect of the research findings only goes to illustrate that the scales that researchers attempt to apply to space are artificial. Massey (1998) argues that rather than discreet units or scales, space is more of a "vast complexity of interconnections" (p. 124). Place then, could be conceptualised as "*constellations of temporary coherence... set within a social space which is the product of relations and interconnections from the very local to the intercontinental*" (Massey, 1998, pp. 124-125). There's no border surrounding Castlemaine or Maryborough that stops young people traversing into the realm of the bush. A border doesn't exist even as a concept that means when young people are asked to photograph places in their town that they value, that they stay within the mapped parameters of the town or even to paved, built up areas with discrete commercial and public spaces. Rather, the home town for these young people involves all the spaces that they traverse, hang out at and engage with on a regular basis, many of these spaces being outside of my initial, limited concept of what town is.

This chapter examines Maryborough and Castlemaine young people's spatial engagement in their home towns, through the lenses of surveillance and privacy. For, a "place to go" for young people is strongly connected to spaces in which young people can have behave autonomously and free from adult supervision (T. Hall *et al.*, 1999, p. 506). The first section charts the complex feelings and experiences of young people growing up in a "tight-knit

community” (Jackie). Specifically focused on the research findings in Maryborough, the realities of the close community are exposed by young people as ambivalent and fraught with tension. As touched on in the previous chapter, I argue that this significantly impacts the way young people in Maryborough engage spatially. The research findings presented in this chapter contrast a significant body of other (mainly British) research on young people’s geographies that suggests for young people the home is lacking in privacy and autonomy (Corrigan, 1979; Holloway & Valentine, 2000b; Matthews, Limb, *et al.*, 2000; Skelton, 2000; Valentine, 2004). Instead, in Maryborough, young people in this study seek privacy at home, identifying it as a space in which they can engage in pursuits that they would not engage with in public. Young people in Maryborough also retreat to unpopulated worlds of the bush and abandoned or isolated rural areas. I have already demonstrated in the Chapter 6 that young people tended to elect to spend more of their leisure time in these private spaces, which are experienced freely, autonomously and creatively. The data in this chapter delves more distinctly into the relationship between these private places to spend time in and the internalised gaze of the “rural panopticon” (Philo, Parr, & Burns, 2017, the concept is expanded upon below). Maryborough’s physical geography, the town enveloped by a tract of post gold-rush regrowth bushlands consisting mostly of state parks and nature reserves, lends itself to this spatial engagement as bushlands are accessible from many housing areas of town on foot. My research here confirms and expands upon Sibley’s (1995) claims that young people are often spatially marginalised, arguing that young people’s experience of community surveillance leads to a reduced sense of spatial agency and hence engenders an ambivalent relationship with their home town. Strong social capital resulting in close community surveillance and reporting on young people affects place attachment and engagement negatively.

The latter part of this chapter then charts the spatial engagement and experiences of surveillance and privacy of young people in Castlemaine. The research participants in

Castlemaine do not appear to experience their home towns as so tightly-knit as is reflected by participants in Maryborough. Subsequently, the sense of being over-surveilled or reported on by community members also did not arise in Castlemaine. While the bush arose as a significant social space in Castlemaine for young people so did a broader range of spaces across the town sphere including commercial, public and institutional spaces.

## 8.2 A “tight-knit community”: the double-edged experience of a close community in Maryborough

One of the features that is commonly regarded as a benefit of living in a small town is the closeness of the community. There is a sense that in a small town, people will know each other and will look out for each other. Small towns are commonly represented as being home to inclusive, caring and connected communities. The simple aspect of a small population increases the likelihood that people will know each other and develop a greater number of strong connections than weak ties (B. J. Bishop, Coakes, & D'Rozario, 2002; Eacott & Sonn, 2006). In different Australian studies of young people's experiences of growing up in small towns and rural areas, a close community was noted as being valued by young people (Eacott & Sonn, 2006; Farrugia, Smyth, & Harrison, 2014b). A close community was raised by research participants in both Castlemaine and Maryborough as a positive feature of small town living, but the discussion on this topic was far more prevalent in Maryborough than in Castlemaine. Below, Greg and Frances describe what they feel is a good thing about living in a small town as opposed to a big town or a city:

**Greg:** *Um, well the community is a lot closer. You know a lot of the people in the street. So, compared to Mildura this is like a tiny block. So yeah.*

**Frances:** *Um... I guess there's like, not a lot of people. Like with too many people, it's just a bit annoying is all I could say, because like you're just basically a face in the crowd.*

So the benefits of a small town are perceived as simply knowing more people, and thus being known by more people. This sense of knowing people and being known in Maryborough enables spontaneous social engagement with people in public. For Frances, this is diametrically opposed to what she presumes would occur in a big town or a city – that she would feel anonymous, and this would reduce the ease of social engagement and thus be experienced negatively. Jacki’s response expands this sense further into a sense of communitarianism, where a close community also provides social support.

**Jacki:** *Small town – um, a tight-knit community. And you get along with a lot of people, so no one’s trying to get into your business. Like, you’re all friends, you watch each other’s houses when no one’s home or you help them out if they need help.*

So for Greg and Jacki and Frances, familiarity with people and place in their hometown is really important. Sara also appreciates the closeness of the community in Maryborough as contributing to her positive feelings about the town – which she equates with both familiarity, high social capital which then leads to feelings of safety.

**Sara:** *Yeah, I guess safe’s the word, and just kinda like, I dunno you go down the street, and like when I’m at work, every customer that comes in, like I know their name, I know who they are and it’s kinda like whereas in a big city I don’t think you get that, you wouldn’t know every customer you’re serving and stuff. I dunno, even just like being at school, it’s like, if one party is on it’s like pretty much every kid’s going to be at it ‘cos everyone kinda knows everyone and everyone’s friends with everyone, and it’s like, there is somewhere to go every weekend because everyone is invited everywhere kind of thing, and it’s like, even just at sporting events it’s such a social thing if that makes sense ... I only live around the corner from school and it’s like ... I’ve walked to school every single day and it’s like, I don’t think I would have*

*been able to do that if I lived in the city. Like, it wouldn't have been safe to kind of walk to school and stuff.*

Sara socially constructs Maryborough as small, safe and friendly in opposition to her sense of the city which is large, unsafe and possibly unfriendly, or at least more difficult to integrate within socially. So, a close-knit is overtly recognised by young people as a great benefit of living in a small town, as demonstrated by the young people quoted above.

However, participants also describe an inverse edge to the benefits of a close community. The flip-side of which results in a lack of privacy, the quick spreading of gossip and being labelled or sat with a reputation that's hard to shake. Research by Eacott and Sonn (2006) on young people's experiences in small towns in Australia also demonstrates that a small community is seen by young people as *both* a positive and negative aspect of living in a small town, especially as it results in a lack of anonymity and privacy (p. 206).

The regulatory control of young people's use of public space is very prevalent in existing research (Brown, 2013; Collins & Kearns, 2001; Hill & Bessant, 1999; Sibley, 1995; Skelton, 2000; Valentine, 2004; Wood, 2016). However, with the exception of Karl's discussion of receiving police attention for having a dirty vehicle, discussed in the previous chapter, this aspect has not emerged so clearly from my own research in Maryborough. Rather, here I discuss a parallel phenomenon, related to the adult surveillance of young people and "small town talk" (Frances) experienced by young people in Maryborough. A number of researchers have used the concept of the panopticon to describe the surveillance of young people in public space by police (Aitken, 2001; Collins & Kearns, 2001). Others have specifically used "rural panopticon" (Leyshon, 2011; Philo *et al.*, 2017; Weller, 2004) in reference to the particular sense of community surveillance that is prevalent in rural areas and small towns. Most significantly, Philo *et al.* (2017) have engaged deeply and theoretically with the concept of the "rural panopticon" as it applies to their study of the experiences of people



living with mental ill-health in the Scottish highlands. The panopticon, most frequently referenced through Foucault's writing in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), is a spatial form designed by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham as an "ideal prison house" or other space where people require monitoring, such as a factory or hospital (Bentham, cited in Philo *et al.*, 2017, p. 230). The design involves an octagonal form with a single central guard room, from which the eight separate incarceration (or indeed work) spaces could be seen. In this way the inmates or workers control their own behaviour through internalising the gaze of the guard, who may or may not be watching at any given time. The notion of community surveillance, or the rural panopticon is important as it relates to identity formation. As Jenkins (2012) argues that processes of identification occur through both internal and external processes – and "social sorting", achieved through surveillance and reporting on others, has a significant role to play here (p. 160).

The rural panopticon as established in Philo *et al.*'s (2017) study functions as a means of social control. The many watching eyes, the potential for gossip and rumour-spreading encourage people to behave within the conventional norms of the local rural society. The rural panopticon then has particular implications for the people with mental ill-health in Philo *et al.*'s study, as it does for young people. That is not to say that adolescence is akin to a mental illness, but rather that young people are actively performing identity work, experimenting with different aspects of their personalities, not to mention going through significant hormonal changes. In this sense, young people are likely to share some aspects of liminality as people experiencing mental illness, being seen as in need of extra surveillance due to being perceived as either vulnerable or a potential threat to people and/or property. As Valentine (2004) writes, "young people's nonconformity and disorderly behaviour is often read as a threat to the personal safety of other children and the elderly and as threat to the peace and order of the street" (p. 85). Likewise, Philo *et al.* (2017) note that in the context of

rural Scotland, nonconformist behaviour attracts focus, compounds observation into surveillance, and increases the sharing of information about people.

It appears that in Maryborough gossip, rumour spreading and reputation-generation emerge as forms of social control. This then impacts how young people use or do not use public space within the town. The spreading of a personal reputation becomes a marker of whether a person conforms to a group's social and moral expectation argues that gossip helps to maintain social order, especially in conventional communities (Nock, 1993). This has also been described as the "power of gossip to produce conformity in communities" (Leyshon, 2011, p. 312). Through this understanding, I start to examine young people's experiences of the rural panopticon, or "small town talk" in Maryborough as socially and indeed spatially controlling.

Here I turn the focus to qualitative data in Maryborough, relating to the sense of the community as over-surveillant of young people, and subsequently the spatial choices young people in Maryborough make when electing how and where to spend their leisure time. In some cases, the lack of privacy discussed by research participants in Maryborough relates to the idea of behavioural transgressions, and the inability to keep information about those from the community. This makes it difficult for young people to freely test out different behaviours as they work on refining their "emergent identities" (T. Hall *et al.*, 1999). This is indicated by the experiences of Frances. While earlier in this chapter Frances mentions the close community and being known by a lot of people in her town as aspects of living in Maryborough that she values dearly, she also reflects an ambivalence. Here is her answer to my question about what she feels are the negative aspects of living in a small town:

**Frances:** *Small town talk [laughs], as I call it. Yeah, so like anything that you do or say gets around too quickly here. And that's one of the things I absolutely hate about*

*here. But it happens everywhere in the long run. But just not as much in, like, Ballarat or Melbourne.*

While, as stated earlier, she perceives that in a city like Ballarat or Melbourne, she would be “just a face in the crowd”, in certain instances she can see how that would be beneficial. For example, when asked about nightlife in Maryborough Frances comments that she would not go for a night out in Maryborough but would opt to go to Ballarat instead. When asked if having more anonymity there had anything to do with that choice, she agrees:

**Frances:** *Yeah, I will stay anonymous so if I did do anything stupid ... and get absolutely wasted or something like that (mind you I never have [laughs]), yeah if I decided I'd be some silly person that decided to get up on the bar table or something and dance around up on it – that way no one will know me and everything.*

While she claims personally to not be too wild, her interview responses suggests that being surrounded by people that she knows and is likely to have known for her whole life is socially constraining. She may have a desire to experiment with behaviours that she wouldn't feel comfortable with the whole town knowing about. In this case we can see how the rural panopticon works as a form of social control – Frances internalises the gaze and judgment of her community, and thus regulates her spatial behaviour, limiting the spaces in which she might “do anything stupid” to spaces in which her anonymity can be preserved.

In this sense, the close community of a small town acts as a double-edged-sword – it has all the benefits of social capital, working to keep people connected and supported, but it also has negative impacts. These negative impacts might be especially felt by young people who may feel stifled by being too conspicuous. The quotes from Mark, Bobby and Karl below illustrate that the lack of privacy in a close community results in young people's experience of different kinds of negative impact. For instance, from simply not having privacy or anonymity, or events being exaggerated or even created through gossip – “the

embellishment of situations, symptoms and behaviours” (Philo *et al.*, 2017, p. 236). Finally, the implications of such a tight knit community for young people can involve the external construction and sharing of an individual’s reputation.

**Mark:** *In a small town everyone knows your business. And it’s really annoying, because you can’t keep anything a secret in a small town.*

**Bobby:** *Um... yeah, well everybody knows everybody. So, if you mess up and do something wrong, everybody will hear about it, it’ll be everywhere by, just like that.*

**Karl:** *Ah, oh well the bad things are just, like everyone pretty well knows you – if you stuff up then everyone finds out pretty quick.*

For Mark, the negative implications of small town life are expressed as simply a lack of privacy and the inability to keep one’s activities to oneself. Bobby and Karl were more focused on the talk that occurs after a “stuff up” or “mess up”. The young person’s behavioural transgression is followed by a quick spreading of information about the incident. While Karl finds the lack of privacy to be frustrating of its own accord, he adds that this negatively experienced feature of a small town extends further to the embellishing and spreading of rumours, which, he laments, can snowball far out of proportion to an original incident.

**Karl:** *Ah, if you do something, by the time it reaches the other side of town it’d be like you’ve done something and ended up killing someone or something like that. And it just digs over, it’s not the story that you’ve actually done.*

**Ember:** *Oh so the rumours get worse as they move around?*

**Karl:** *[laughs] Yeah. Just ‘cause it’s such a small town it spreads so much quicker as well.*

Like Karl, Nina also expresses frustration at the speed with which rumours would spread around Maryborough. But Nina's articulation of this frustration doesn't even start with a behavioural transgression, but merely with rumour.

**Nina:** *Um, bad things [about living in a small town]? Not really. I can't think of anything. Oh wait – other than the fact that, um, if a rumour gets started about you, it can spread like [clicks fingers] wildfire. And, I've had quite a few rumours of me go around. And so, yeah.*

**Ember:** *Oh OK.*

**Nina:** *I have a little bit of a reputation.*

So in Nina's case, the spreading of information about an individual (whether the information is accurate or inaccurate) can affect the ways that the individual is perceived by others. The notion of "having a reputation" often relates to behaviours that are perceived as negative such as argumentativeness, arrogance, violence, promiscuity, or drug and alcohol abuse, for instance are behaviours that young people can frequently gain a reputation for. While this reputation-generation is a result of the "identificatory work of others", Jenkins (2008) argues, that an external identification or labelling, can often become internalised (p. 97). Thereby, the "individual's subsequent behaviour and biography become organised – by herself and by others with reference to an identification which is now internal as well as external" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 97). The spreading of information about people in a small town context can have ongoing impacts. Of course, it is important to note that people also often actively resist the identification that comes with this form of external labelling (Jenkins, 2008).

Sara talks at length about the difficulties of getting rid of a reputation once it exists and shifting people's perceptions. However, a reputation can also be generated through people's perceptions of an individual's family or friends. Sara discusses this aspect of reputation

generation in more detail and she describes experiences in which both her and her friend had been labelled due to their family associations. During the interview she describes the different negative perceptions that people in Maryborough had of her and her friend due to knowing their families rather than due to her own behaviours.

**Sara:** *It does get like say if you get a bad reputation or something you kind of, once you've got that you can't get rid of that if that makes sense. Whereas, if you were in a big town you could, kind of ... start over again or something. But, in a small town, I don't know, once you've got that, name or whatever, that's kind of stuck on you.*

**Ember:** *So, is that sort of about privacy?*

**Sara:** *Yeah, and I guess it comes down to, like everyone knowing everyone, and everyone knowing everyone's business kind of thing. And, even just like little things, like in a small town, I think it's like, I don't know – if, 'cause everyone knows like your families too and it's like you get really stereotyped too if that's the word. And it's like, if you come from a posh family then it's like you're known as a posh kid kind of thing, and it's like, if you come from a like, not so wealthy family, then it's like you're already known as like a feral. I don't know, like my best friend who comes from [another town], it's like, she hasn't had the best upbringing or whatever, but she still like – she's probably doing better than me at school, and like, she's gone and got herself a job and like, she's doing really well, and she's doing better probably than what like the posh kids are doing, and like, she still gets classed as like a "feral", if that makes sense.*

Sara also goes on to discuss the reputation that she has herself in school because of her brothers.

**Sara:** *[my brothers] were very posh and in with the popular group and so people look at me and are kind of like “oh, you’re just like them and you’re going to be arrogant like them”, kind of thing. And it’s like, no, I’m not.*

This type of labelling that Sara finds herself subjected to is “infused with class symbolism and class envy and antagonism” { #839`, p. 915} in a similar way to Reay’s study of young people in the UK{ #839`, p. 915}. In Sara’s experience, she has found that that people assume that she will exhibit behaviours associated with coming from a wealthier family than perhaps her peers do, which in her social world entails arrogance or conceit. In this case, a lack of anonymity has made it difficult to shake the perceptions people hold of Sara and her friend due to their family associations. So while Sara, like Frances above, really values the closeness of the community in Maryborough, she also finds it socially constraining. It seems in Maryborough, reputations are sticky business.

In a way the examples used here to describe young people’s ambivalent experiences of a close community is reflective of what have been identified as some of the negative aspects of social capital in that social capital can be exploited to achieve antisocial outcomes, specifically through ethnocentrism or limited acceptance of difference (Putnam, 2000, p. 20 – see also Portes, 1998, 2014). In this sense, the high social capital experienced by young people in Maryborough is also employed to achieve social control through the rural panopticon. Within this discussion regarding the closeness of the community in Maryborough, we start to see the complexity of the culture of a place and how it can affect the relationships that young people have with their small hometowns. In one way, the perceived closeness of the community in Maryborough offers safety, comfort and reassurance. However, at the same time the closeness of the community can be experienced as stifling for its lack of privacy – impacting young people’s capacity to freely experiment with their identity-formation, and even more negatively as an unsafe space in which

rumours are started and circulated, and reputations generated based on things that are extraneous to an individual's actions.

### 8.2.1 Seeking privacy

#### *The private sphere is private*

Adult surveillance and control of public space arises as an issue in a number of studies examining rural young people's use of public space (Leyshon, 2011; Matthews, Taylor, *et al.*, 2000; Skelton, 2000; Weller, 2004) as well as some studies of urban young people (Corrigan, 1979; Matthews, Limb, *et al.*, 2000; Valentine, 2004). However, in the aforementioned studies, young people tended to continue to take up public space, often being moved on by adults only temporarily to avoid immediate conflict. In fact, research suggests that the act of hanging around in public space for young people can be a means of resisting adult power, and thus also a means of gaining agency (Valentine, 2004 p. 85). Many of these studies also refer to the street or public town space being an appealing place for young people away from the parental surveillance and lack of autonomy at experienced at home. For instance, in their study of young people's use of the street as a social space in edge-of-town estates in England, Matthews, Limb and Taylor's (2000) results indicate that "the retreat from the 'street' is likely to be a socio-spatially selective phenomenon" as their young participants were more likely to be told/encouraged to go out of the home during evening leisure time, and also viewed home space as a site of adult control and lacking in privacy (p. 71-72). Similarly, Valentine's (2004) research sees British young people opting to spend time in public space rather than at home, as she argues that young people are subject to more behavioural and temporal regulations that guide how space can be used – and that adults define the rules and limits, particularly within the home and within school settings. This contrasts significantly with my research findings in Maryborough, for many of my young participants the home is a place in which privacy is treasured and young people can engage in activities or pursuits they would not engage with in public due to the feelings of being



observed, judged, or reported on by the wider community. It should be noted that it is likely that the physical geography and regional housing design is likely to have an impact here – the physical dimensions of the homes in council estates or indeed in rural villages cited in the above mentioned references, are possibly more likely to engender a reduced sense of privacy than the often large, many roomed, big-back-yarded houses of small-town and rural Australia.

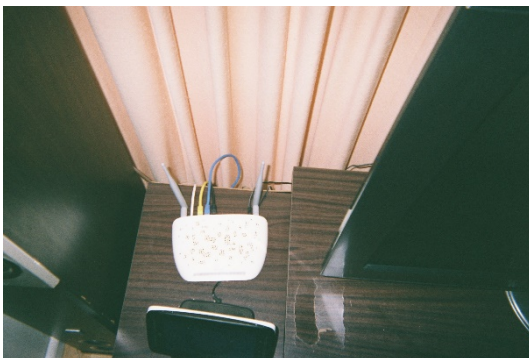
A number of research participants in Maryborough discuss opting to spend their leisure time at home, several also taking interior and/or exterior photographs of their homes. For instance, most of Greg’s photographs are taken inside his home (16 out of 24 photographs – a selection of which are pictured below).



*Photograph 29 Maryborough, Greg, 1a24*



*Photograph 30 Maryborough, Greg, 1a12*



*Photograph 31 Maryborough, Greg, 1a17*



*Photograph 32 Maryborough, Greg 1a22*

Greg was quite shy in the interview and many of his responses consist of ambiguous statements, almost questioning in tone. However, in the following interview excerpt his responses are limited in content, but are quick and assured:

**Ember:** *Are there places that you go to feel free?*

**Greg:** *Home.*

**Ember:** *Home. So home is where you feel free?*

**Greg:** *Yep.*

Within the context of his domestic sphere, Greg partakes in activities such as playing video games, painting, and teaching himself to play keyboards as well as socialising with friends. Aside from the railway station he photographed, public or commercial space within the realms of town doesn't appear in Greg's regular routine. Similarly, Frances discusses her photograph [1d1] of her home in Maryborough, also equating home to a space that is free – in this case meaning free from judgment.

**Frances:** *Like that's probably my favourite place to be in the whole world actually.*

*Like, it's just so nice there and it's comfortable, you don't feel like awkward, you can do whatever you want and not feel judged.*



*Photograph 33, Maryborough, Frances, 1d1*

So home, for Frances is constructed as a space of autonomy and lacking in external judgment in opposition to the public sphere which is lacking in privacy and full of judgment. I further query her about whether she partakes in particular pursuits at home that she avoids in public.

**Frances:** *Umm... singing? [laughs]. Yeah, I normally wouldn't sing out in public or anything. I'll sit there and think it in my head, but never sing out loud. But then when I am at home, I'm always singing as I'm doing everything. And um, gaming is another thing. We went down to [a gaming shop] the other day and they wanted me to have a go at some games and all that. And I was just like nup. Nup. It's not happening – I play too much X-Box at home anyway [laughs].*

**EP:** *So you'd do that in the privacy of your own home but not out, in public.*

**Frances:** *Yeah, because that way I feel like I'm not being judged for my skills. Like, I know there was worse players than me there and everything, but I was like "yeah, nah – I'm still not doing this". Yeah, I just didn't feel comfortable and that was it.*

Frances discusses a cherished activity experienced in the private sphere with ease and comfort being avoided in the public sphere due to fear of being observed and hence judged. While in this case she is discussing the judgment likely arising from peers rather than from adult observation.

Megan admits to being particularly shy, and prefers to spend time at her own home or else engage in visceral activities in bushland and rural areas such as motorbike riding. Her photographs and interview content reflect this significantly.



*Photograph 34, Maryborough, Megan, 1f15*

Paired with her discussions about her use of space, Megan's photograph above [1f15] of a large open space devoid of people, a shopping centre in the distance reveals an engagement with space predicated on limited social engagement. When asked what she feels is a

negative aspect about small town living, Megan replies simply “you know everyone”. While some participants cite this as a positive aspect of place, and others as a double-edged feature of small-town living, for Megan it is simply negative. Her photographs and interview indicate that aside from her TAFE, the Railway Station and an occasional visit to the shopping centre pictured above, she avoids public, town space as much as possible. Instead she retreats to home and the bush as places in which she can privately spend her social time with family and a select group of friends.

Maryborough is geographically situated within a tract of bushlands including Maryborough Regional Park, Paddys Ranges State Park, and a number of nature conservation reserves as well as privately owned bushlands. For some of my research participants, this proximity to bushscapes is highly regarded as it affords privacy and recreation that is not accessible from within an urban environment. Three of the photo-elicitation participants in Maryborough took most of their photographs of bushscapes – Megan took eight out of fifteen, Tessa five out of seven, and Jacki took three out of her four photographs of bushscapes surrounding Maryborough. Other participants also photographed the bush and talked fondly of it.

#### *Privacy in the bush*

Sara has a long association with the bush behind her house and describes feeling completely familiar with this area of land [as pictured below in photo 1i8] which she would visit with a range of different people including family members, neighbours, and friends, as well as on her own.



*Photograph 35, Maryborough, Sara, 1i18*

**Sara:** ... me and my brothers used to spend a lot of time in this bush and like, someone could dump me in that bush and I would know where to go and like I just, know it back to front kind of thing. And like I have a lot of friends living close to me too so we'd all meet out in the bush and like build cubbies and like, my next door neighbour... we used to spend a lot of time in the bush and we rode our motorbikes there and did kind of everything there... that's just where I've spent a lot of my time kind of thing. And... now, like I go for walks out there and runs out there and stuff so it kind of like hasn't just been a phase of being little, like I still go there now kind of thing.

The bushland pictured above is described like a playground, or an extension of her own backyard that enables her social activities as diverse as walking, running, picnicking, building cubbies, and motor biking. The long association and complete familiarity with this land makes Sara feel completely at ease there. Later in the interview I ask Sara what she would take with her if she had to leave Maryborough. She replies "I wish I could take this bush".

The proximity, familiarity and comfort that Sara feels with this bush, as well as the recreational opportunities that it affords, have led to a strong attachment to it. Sara also notes that if she had a camera over the summer time she would have photographed “the Res”, where she and her friends choose to swim, because “we don’t really like to be in front of people when we’re swimming”. The interview and photographic data arising out of Sara’s participation in this research indicates that she and her friends are constantly electing to spend time outside of the township of Maryborough. This is illustrated by her photographs and description of hanging out by the creek in nearby Carisbrook in the previous chapter, out of the gaze of the public, it appears that the sense of spatial autonomy increases.

Sara also indicated a fear of certain places in the bush, but this was more directed at the personal safety of her and her friends in regard to other unknown people. For instance, Sara describes a place [pictured in 1i15] that she and her friends no longer visit as they do not feel safe there. During the interview at first she found it difficult to put her finger on what she was fearful of, but after reflecting upon it, she realized that it was because of the lack of isolation with the growing popularity of this particular place she and her friends did not feel safe due to other people’s movements there.

**Sara:** *That’s out at Battery Dam. And that’s just kind of another place where we’ve gone before and we’ve gone camping out there a few times. And we kind of don’t really go there much anymore, ‘cause, it’s a bit creepy out there. I don’t know, I don’t know what it is about it – it’s very, because it’s a bit into the bush. Like, you go off the main road and have to drive a little bit, and, I don’t know, it was fun at the start but now it’s gotten a bit creepy and I don’t know why.*

**Ember:** *So there’s nothing that happened there or people that has given you the creeps?*

**Sara:** *Yeah, no, I think it's, it's become a bit more popular – like, no one used to know about it, well they did know about it but no one used to go there and I don't know, like when we've been there a few times, there's been a few more cars that have driven down and just drive around and go back, so now it's kind of like, I don't know. We just don't feel as safe there anymore, 'cause, there never used to be anyone, but, yeah I think that's probably what it is, yeah.*

**Ember:** *So is it like, you don't know what they're going there for?*

**Sara:** *Yeah, no yeah and it's just like creepy cars so yeah, it's like oh we just stay away from there now.*

While Sara identifies several rather isolated places in the interview and photographs that she and her friends really enjoy exploring or hanging out at, the isolation of a place actually becomes threatening for her when it is intruded upon. Isolation is attractive for Sara and her friends as it affords them privacy and may allow them to be uninhibited. However, in Sara's words such a place becomes "creepy" once unknown others enter that sphere for unknown reasons. So in this case, the place in itself is not threatening or creepy, it is the combination of the isolation with an interrupting stranger that brings a sense of danger to the place. At the same time as she described the creepy feeling out at Battery Dam, Sara feels quite differently about the bush behind her home, which she describes in the previous section as more like a backyard. When she discusses walking home from parties with friends through the bush instead of getting a taxi, she reasoned that this is felt to be the safe option.

**Sara:** *... it's like, I don't know, I feel safe there, it's like, no one's going to get me there like that's my home. Yeah.*

So perhaps in Sara's experience, the bush behind her home is regarded as being an extension of her home and the safety that she senses in her home is extended to the neighbouring bush. Through familiarity and a sense of belonging to this place, the bushland



behind Sara's house has developed an "aura of safety" in which potential danger feels impossible (Merry, 1981, cited in van der Burgt, 2015).

Frances also has a long association with a tract of bush located by her home. When asked about what else she would have taken photographs of if she either had more time or if it was a different season when she had the camera she indicates that she would have photographed the bush behind her house, which is where she spent a lot of time with her dog and with one of her close friends. For Frances and her friend, building cubby houses continues to be an entertaining pastime into her late teens. I ask her what drives her and her friend to do this activity in the bush.

**Frances:** *Um, just the fun of it basically, and it gives us like the whole survival skills and everything, like we pitch ourselves as the massive survivalists like Bear Grylls or something like that. So, yeah it just makes it fun that we do them kinds of things. And yeah we like to explore so when we are in the bush and everything like that we see a lot of natural wildlife and everything like that so we see a whole bunch of kangaroos, we've seen a koala and echidna, we've seen basically everything – the whole of Australian wildlife and all of that, because we go out into the bush a fair bit. Yeah. But making cubbies and all of that – we always have wanted to camp in the bush and everything, so we've always every time she comes over and all of that we always go into the bush and build cubbies and think – you know, "we're going to stay here the night" and then it gets too cold and we're like "nah we're going to go home". It just makes it fun though [laughs].*

So, as with Sara who feels the bush is like an extension of her back yard, Frances also seems to describe the bush as a similar back-drop for playful activities. The bush also offers privacy for activities that people might choose not to do in busy public spaces. For instance, Frances refers to the response that other people have to her and her friend building cubbies in the

bush and indicates that people have a questioning and possibly judgmental reaction to two young adults carrying out this pastime which she feels she has to defend.

**Frances:** *Yeah – a lot of people look at us and go “what, you build cubbies?” and I’m like “yeah, nothing wrong with that, who cares?” [laughs].*

The bush though, gives Frances and her friend cover and security to have fun with this activity without having to justify themselves to others. The previous section of this chapter revealed that in Maryborough exists a fairly consistent frustration with the lack of privacy afforded to young people in town. However, several participants photographed and discussed their strong connections with the bushlands surrounding the town – and these spaces are socially constructed as fun, safe and free. These participants have articulated that the bush not only provides a place for leisure and recreation, and physical respite from the heat of summer, but also that it affords privacy and anonymity that they do not feel when they are in town.

The picture that is starting to emerge then, as we have also seen in the preceding chapter is that largely, young people in this study in Maryborough do not orientate toward public space in town for spending leisure time. Outside of sport, school, work and shopping, young people in Maryborough choose to be out of the eye of the rural panopticon, either in home or bush spaces. As I’ve discussed, a number of researchers have illustrated – at least in a British urban and rural context – that young people tend to seek privacy from adult surveillance on the street or other public places in and around town (Corrigan, 1975; Matthews, Limb, *et al.*, 2000; Skelton, 2000; Valentine, 2004). This contrasts significantly to the experiences of my participants in Maryborough who tend to avoid the streets and public spaces of the town – viewing the parks as for younger children, and hanging around on the street or other public and commercial places lacking appeal. Young people in Maryborough experience the rural panopticon as a risk to their ability to freely negotiate and develop their

identities without being surveilled, reported on, and gossiped about or gaining a reputation. So it seems in Maryborough, the rural panopticon is experienced rather negatively, and the tactics that young people use to resist its gaze predominantly relate to spatial avoidance. In a sense this relates to young people's spatial tactics used to negotiate risk. Danielle van der Burgt defines three categories of tactics that young people employ to negotiate risk, including spatial avoidance: "avoiding certain places in order to avoid risk and feel safe" (van der Burgt, 2015, p. 182 – note, van der Burgt uses the term strategy – but in this instance I have adopted tactics to align with my terminology used in the thesis). Some researchers have revealed that young people use the tactic of walking, and being on the move as a means to avoid adult surveillance when hanging out in public (Horton *et al.*, 2014; Leyshon, 2011).

In the case of my research participants in Maryborough, young people actively negotiate the social risks associated with the rural panopticon by choosing to avoid populated areas of town, seeking privacy at home, and also by hanging around in bushlands. As Sibley (1995) argues that young people are marginalised and often subject to geographies of exclusion, my research in Maryborough has illustrated that this may not be only related to the control of public space by regulatory means, but also linked with the concept of the rural panopticon. The qualitative data reflects that while the gaze of the rural panopticon is certainly present in Castlemaine, there appear to be a greater breadth of spatial engagement by young people in Castlemaine than in Maryborough. In the following section I discuss the research findings as they relate to young people's perceptions and experience of privacy and surveillance in Castlemaine.

### 8.3 Territory and changing concepts of cool in Castlemaine

There are instances of young people's use of bushlands surrounding Castlemaine as a space of privacy with the intent of avoiding the adult gaze. However, the ambivalence of a tight-

knit community did not arise in my participant cohort in Castlemaine. Subsequently the young people in Castlemaine appear to have a greater sense of spatial agency, seeking to spend leisure time in outdoor, natural environments *as well as* commercial and public spaces within the centre of town.

As the bush was described like an extension of the backyard for Sara and Frances in Maryborough, this was also Lizzie's experience of growing up at the edge of Castlemaine, with easy access on foot to bush-land. Lizzie describes her long association to Kalimna Point, pictured in 316 in such a way that it mirrors Sara and Frances' experience of growing up in homes neighbouring bush in Maryborough. The space caters for a progression of activities, from family-based picnicking and exploring to a more secluded teenage hang-out space.

**Lizzie:** *So, when I was growing up we spent a lot of time walking in Kalimna and looking for orchids, and go to the damn and catch yabbies, and climb trees and make little tree houses and stuff. So I used to go up there with mum and dad, and my little friends. I had a lot of my birthday parties there. And then again as I got older, it was kind of a place that you'd go as a teenager, to just be alone with your friends and not be bothered. Because you would never get pulled over by the cops for drinking or anything, you would just be sheltered among the trees. Yeah, we used to camp out there sometimes. It was lovely...*



*Photograph 36, Castlemaine, Lizzie, 316*

The sense of the bush providing a space to be as a teenager, to “not be bothered” and “just be sheltered” indicates that perhaps for Lizzie’s teen years, the bush provides a panacea for the spaces more centrally in town where community and/or police surveillance are felt more keenly. Lizzie’s experience of the bush near her childhood home is similar to Grace’s experience of the old Castlemaine Gaol. Both provide a place where one can be alone with their friends, outside of community or police surveillance. Here Grace discusses photograph 3k20.

**Grace:** *This is at the old gaol, ah, like I’ve got so many like memories of the old gaol because like in Year Ten me and my friend River and my friend Joe we used to like grab some beers and just go and sit at the old gaol and like walk home by ourselves. It’s like, my friend Liam and I there used to be these two big seats near the front of it,*

*and we'd just sit on those and just talk for a few hours and then go home.... it was quite late when we'd go there so there wouldn't be anyone around.*



*Photograph 37 Castlemaine, Grace, 3k20*

These places to “just be alone” (Lizzie) or “just go and sit” (Grace) offer privacy and quiet where young people can be with their friends. Whether taking part in illicit behaviour or not, the appeal of these places is that they are outside of the prying eyes of both adult community members and law enforcement. For both Lizzie and Grace, the association with these sites as a place of private seclusion is primarily nostalgic. This is partly due to their age, both of them no longer underage, there’s no need for them to take part in activities like drinking or smoking outside of the adult public eye. However, Grace describes the change in her feelings toward the site of the Gaol as more directly linked to the development of the place.

**Grace:** *... it was before the café was there so, now the café is there, like if you go there you kind of feel like there’s people watching you when you’re just sitting there.*

The arrival of a café in what was once a space of seclusion, clearly means for Grace that it no longer affords the privacy that it once did, even “just sitting there” can give her the feeling that she is being surveilled. It is interesting to note, as previously discussed in Chapter 6, that Grace appreciates cafés as a “kind of a place that you go and chill”. But a case in which the arrival of a new café at the old Castlemaine Gaol site, adds to Grace’s feelings of being under surveillance there. The arrival of a new café at a site where Grace previously enjoyed hanging out, sometimes participating in the illicit activity of underage drinking, is referred to as a hindrance and reduces the positive association with the place. Whereas, when Grace and her friends are participating in social norms from within a café, surveillance is a non-issue and the site can be a venue for the same kind of activity as the bench seat outside the Gaol – namely, a “place that you go and chill”.

The sites discussed above as significant places for “just being” with friends are found on the outskirts of town and accessed for their privacy and seclusion. A number of the Castlemaine participants also photographed hang-out spaces right in the centre of town. This indicates that although there’s an awareness of surveillance in town, it is perhaps not experienced as an entirely restricting force as it is in Maryborough. For instance, five of the participants photographed Victory Park as a significant place. The park is right in the centre of town, adjacent to the supermarket and bordering one of the main streets. Three of these photographs, taken by a 17, 18 and 25 year-old, centre on a particular table that appears to be a designated day time hang-out space for particular young people. These photographs and the discussion around this very particular site, illustrate a really interesting progression of perception of social status for the young people concerned. For 17-year-old Rebecca, the table is a currently a prime hang out zone with innate social significance and status attached. Here she discusses her photograph of the place [pictured below in 3m19].

**Rebecca:** *Number 19 is the tree in Vic Park, and it's the tree with the table underneath it. So like, it's the cool kids' table. I don't know, but whenever my friends go there we usually sit on that table or another one.*

**Ember:** *Do you feel like you're a winner when you get that table?*

**Rebecca:** *Yep, we're like "you can't touch this table, it's ours". It's a bummer when there's just some people, like a couple sitting on it, but they're like thirty or forty years old. Because they don't understand the social importance of this table [laughs].*



*Photograph 38, Castlemaine, Rebecca, 3m19*

Rebecca's reference to this site as the "cool kids' table" and her claim to its ownership implies that she designates the social status of being cool kids to herself and her peers. For her and her group of friends there is a clear social code that exists around this space. When this social code is transgressed by adults, this presents itself as disappointing for Rebecca and her friends. It is worth mentioning that Rebecca laughs at this, as obviously the adults concerned would have no knowledge of the social code or status attached to this site.



Rebecca’s description of this photograph and her reasons for taking it demonstrate a strong felt sense of ownership of this place, which directly enhances a sense of social status. For twenty-five-year-old Lizzie, the table is discussed in terms of her past connection with it. As a teenager Lizzie felt very similar associations that Rebecca describes above. However, several years after the fact she also imbues her teen memories of the place with her contemporary assessment of it. Here she describes her photograph of the table [pictured below in 3l16].



Photograph 39, Castlemaine, Lizzie, 3l16

**Lizzie:** *So this is another big omen of my teen years. I think I spent several years of my life at this table. Which is in the centre of Victory Park ... But that was the place to go, which was really stupid, because it’s right in the middle of town, and the cops would just drive around all day looking for you, so you’d be wagging school and you’d be sitting at this table in the middle of the park. They’d just drive in and be like, “what are you doing here?” But it was very – I think because it felt, it was public and*

*you felt cool. You felt really cool being there, but yeah I spent years of my life wasted on that table – which is a bit silly now that I think about it.*

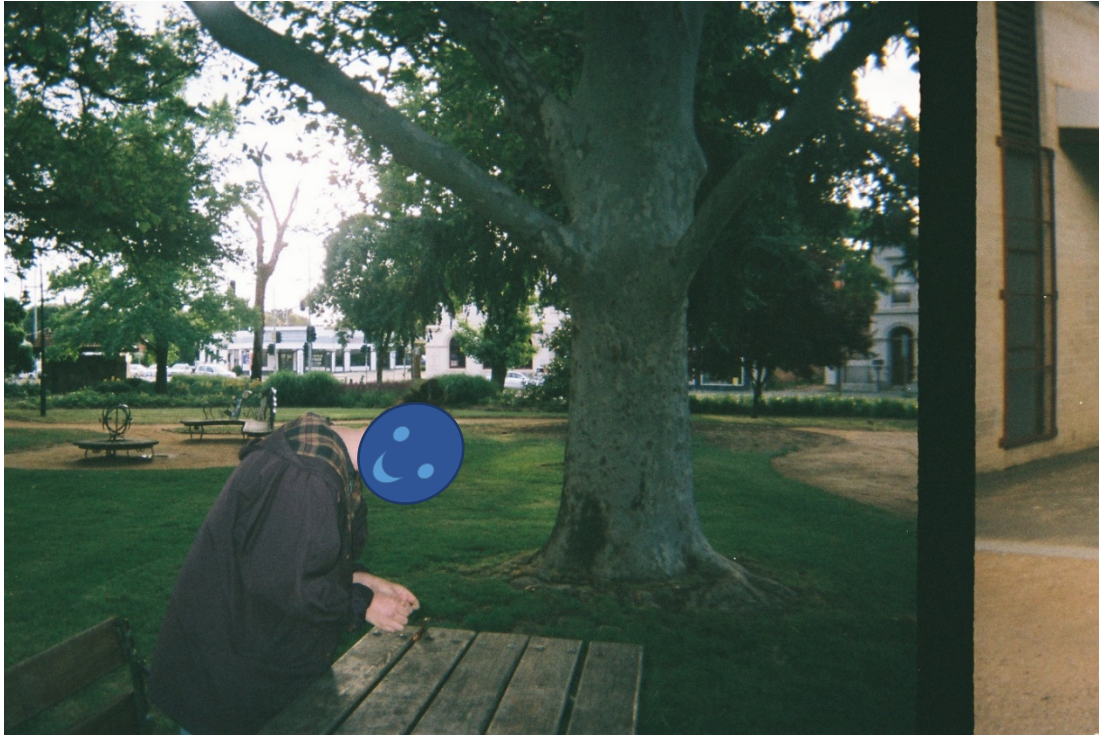
Like Rebecca, there is a keen sense of social status and ownership felt with this particular table. However, Lizzie also describes her and her friends' transgressive behaviour as intertwined with the generation of social status ascribed to the place. In Lizzie's teen experience there was a direct relationship between the public nature of the table, and the rebellious nature of activity behaviours participated in there with its high social status. Her present-day reflection on this as being "really stupid" due to the fact that you were so easily caught, illustrates a change in perception of social status and codes. Lizzie goes on to further illustrate this change in perception as she describes her contemporary association with this space as a mid-twenties mother-of-two.

**Lizzie:** *But now I go to the park [pictured in 3/15] I go to take my kids to the playground. And it's a nice little thing, because I see those teenagers sitting at that table smoking and, you know, eating chips and gravy, and they just, they don't look cool, they just look a bit sad honestly. Part of me is like, I'm sure I looked cooler than they do, and another part of me is like I probably just looked as tragic as they do to the mothers over at the playground with their kids.*

Lizzie's perception of contemporary young people hanging out at this table is imbued with her own lived experience of this space, and thus she shares with current teenagers a shared understanding of the significance of this very specific place. So, even while she perceives contemporary young people sitting at the table as looking "a bit sad" and "tragic", her personal experience and progression leads her to see the social phenomenon positively, described as "a nice little thing".

The third photograph of this site was taken by Dominic and described in much less affectionate terms than by Lizzie or Rebecca. Like Lizzie, Dominic had an earlier phase of his

life where he would hang around at the table, however he doesn't view it in nostalgic terms now. Here he discusses his photographs of Victoria Park [pictured in 3i24], the table [pictured in 3i25] and surrounding amenities [3i26 and 3i27].



Photograph 40, Castlemaine, Dominic, 3i25

**Dominic:** *So that's at Victory Park in Castlemaine with my friend Grace, my best friend. It's like growing up as like a fifteen year old we used to just go down there and that was kind of like, the cool thing, but now we're eighteen we look at those kids doing that and think "oh it's so dirty". And like, people from the Skate Park they come across there, and sit there and buy like the really cheap soft drinks and just sit in the park and just be obnoxious. And it's kind of like, at night police just circle around it – like drive laps around Victory Park – so it's kind of like the joke of like "oh lets go to Vic Park" [ironic tone]... Yeah. So, [photograph 3i25] is just like a gross table where people just sit there and smoke darts. And Grace is like picking up rubbish from between seats and putting it in the bin...*

**Ember:** *And so, is it a place that you associated with a few years ago but now is it more of a social joke or something?*

**Dominic:** *Yeah, that's what it's turned into. A bit of a joke.*

For Dominic and his friendship group, the three years between fifteen and eighteen cater for a significant change in what places are considered cool.

This evolution of the places and behaviour that young people consider cool at a given age into that which might be reflected on more light-heartedly as humorous, ironic, or even cringe-worthy is potentially influenced by the growing freedoms that arise as young people mature. When young people and their friends get older they may gain more freedoms from their parents, gain their driver's licenses, get their first cars, and come of age to drink or smoke and to vote. As this occurs, a broader suite of places become part of their leisure and recreation experience. This is the case for several of the research participants, who are enjoying the new-found freedoms of car travel, attending house parties, and accessing pubs and bars legally. Grace discusses in detail this range of growing freedoms that come with age.

**Grace:** *I feel like, over the year – because I turned eighteen now, like i've got all of these privileges of an eighteen year old – if this camera was really big and I had a lot more photos to take, the kind of photos that I take would have changed a lot as I turned eighteen, 'cause the places that I hang out now are completely different, like I didn't go to many parties at the start of the year, and then at the end of the year 'cause I'm 18, I can buy my own drinks, so I just go to parties a lot. And yeah, people having their licences and stuff as well, whereas like, when I was younger, when I was 17, like you kind of have to stay in Castlemaine, because you couldn't drive anywhere basically. So you'd find places to hang out which is mostly in people's houses and like, the outdoor pool.*

For some of the participants this freedom – especially through newly being able to drive or be driven by friends – allows them access to natural environments outside of Castlemaine with which they describe strong affection. For instance, Julia discusses her photographs of Mount Alexander [pictured in 3f5, below] depicting a long-distance view from the top of the Mountain, and 3f8 depicting a large boulder in the foreground, surrounded by native vegetation and the horizon in the distance. The photographs were taken when she drove with her friend and dad while she was practicing driving on her learners' permit. I asked if she goes there very often, and she responds:

*Julia: Yeah, fairly often I guess, just if you're bored and now that a few of my friends have Ps [probationary drivers' licenses], we can drive out there... It's really pretty. And then we did a walk around Dog Rocks which is just on the side of Mount alexander. And that was also just around Sunset. It's really glowy. And really big trees there.*

The experience of being in this type of natural setting is valued for its aesthetic and sensory values. While the natural site might not appear to relate to the thesis as a social or cultural aspect of Castlemaine, the natural environment in this case is discussed as being experienced socially. For instance, for Julia the exploration of this natural site is enabled by in learning to drive and through her friends' newly gained driving licenses. Grace is more explicit in articulating how the experience of Mount Alexander changes depending on who she's visits the place with.



*Photograph 41 Castlemaine, Julia, 3f5*



*Photograph 42 Castlemaine, Grace, 3k21*

**Grace:** *This is also Mount Alexander [3k21] – this is when I went with Dominic, two days after I went with Julia, I’ve found like going with different people, it’s like a completely different vibe up there, like going with Julia, we’re just like chilling out eating some noodles. Going up there with Dominic, I don’t know it was just different. Different people for sure like change the vibe – but it was still really fun and we took a lot of photos up there and had a chat.*

While Grace can’t pinpoint the exact way she experiences the place differently depending on the presence of different friends, she does note that while the place is always experienced positively, each visit will have distinctly different vibes.

Dominic also discusses the new-found freedom of driving, which is directly related to accessing natural environments together with a social group. His photographs contain images of Golden Point Reservoir [3i22, 3i21] and Mount Alexander [3i18, 3i19, 3i20] which he discusses here:

**Dominic:** *[Points to 3i20, 3i21] That’s out at Golden Point, out at the Res. We always plan Res trips with our friends because it’s out past Chewton so we always have to snag rides off people to get out there but it’s so beautiful. We’ve got a spot just a little way out there we always sit there and have some food and go for a swim. It’s like just a natural body of water so it’s just so nice to swim in... And um, a little bit past out past that is [points to 3i18, 3i19, 3i20] Mount Alexander. Which is, I’ve just been there so much, like just for a drive. I’ll be at a friend’s house and say “ah what are we going to do” and “oh we’ll go to Mt Alexander” so we just like jump in the car and drive and sit out there and just look out. It’s quite beautiful looking out and just like the size factor – like straight down below there’s a shipping container and it’s only that big [gestures small size with fingers].*

**Ember:** *So is there something about having that long distance view?*

**Dominic:** *Yeah. So we'll go up there and just have a nice chat, like talk about what's going on, like how we feel about it.*

For Dominic these natural environmental sites are always experienced socially; the Reservoir as a site of recreation for picnicking and swimming with friends, and Mount Alexander as a site more for quiet reflection and emotional engagement. The interview elicits that for Dominic the proximity to these places around Castlemaine is experienced as both far (when relying on others to drive) and near (when driving himself).

Lizzie's photographs also contain a picture of the Golden Point Reservoir, which she describes as having evolving social significance over the course of her life. Here she discusses her photograph of the reservoir [pictured below in 3|11].



*Photograph 43 Castlemaine, Lizzie, 3|5*

**Lizzie:** *This is Golden Point Reservoir, or Expedition Pass. And again, this is the kind of place that has transformed as I've grown up. Initially, yeah I used to go out there, we'd get one of our parents to drop us out there, and we'd go out there and swim and have a few beers and spend the evening and sometimes camp on the other side.*



*But it was, yeah very much a party place. And um, whereas now in summer it's where we go with the kids almost every night and guaranteed our friends will be there with the kids and you can just have a lovely communal dinner and a place to swim, and I mean you can still have a beer, but it's all changed, it's all much more above-board I guess. But it's still one of the most beautiful places. And if anyone comes to town who's never been here before – it's one place I'll definitely take them, just because it's so lovely. And the water's just beautiful.*

In her younger years, the Reservoir provided a place for privacy and separation from parents, for Lizzie and her friends, and a place to engage in illicit activity such as underage drinking. After having her own children, the site has now become a space for spontaneous social engagement with friends-as-parents. A place at which they share the experience of parenting – indicated by communal dinners. The experience of doing this while swimming in a body of water perhaps allows for social connections to develop in a casual and unstructured manner. The natural environmental sites around Castlemaine photographed and discussed by research participants appear to be valued as spaces in which social interaction and community-building can occur, albeit in a casual and unstructured manner.

#### 8.4 Conclusion

Place is a vital aspect of young people's lives. Notably as young people gain increasing autonomy from parental supervision, their spatial parameters increase as does the breadth of meaningful places with which they engage. A number of researchers cite the importance of young people having a spaces in which they can hang out socially, but freely and without adult supervision. Hall *et al.* (1999) argue that the development of "emergent identities" for young people is strongly linked with space and place, and having a "place to go", they write:

The emphasis here is not so much on privacy (a place for oneself) as it is on movement and association (a place to go) – space in which to meet and be with

others, space which young people can enter on their own terms and on their own initiative, unaccompanied and unsupervised by adults. (p. 506)

This chapter has discussed the tactics used by young people in small towns to carve out a “place to go” in their small home towns. The physical geography of both Castlemaine and Maryborough mean that the bush is easily accessible and an attractive option for being unsupervised and unsurveilled. The rural panopticon is experienced much more strongly in Maryborough than in Castlemaine. The strong sense of community is experienced as a double-edged phenomenon for young people. In his critique of social capital, Portes (1998) argues that social capital can be applied as a means of discipline:

The social capital created by tight community networks is useful to parents, teachers, and police authorities as they seek to maintain discipline and promote compliance among those under their charge. (p. 10)

It appears to be the case in Maryborough that high social capital erodes agency among young people as they are subject to the socially controlling forces of a close community – the network of which extends well beyond their own parents and guardians. This then forms an ambivalent place relationship. This phenomenon relates strongly to the discussion on young people’s boredom in the previous chapter. Bushland and domestic places are those that young people experience as unmitigated, and allow for a freer, less boring spatial engagement. In Castlemaine, however, a sense of adult and police authority remains present, but appears to have less of an impact on young people’s spatial agency. Young people in Castlemaine also appear more likely to resist the rural panopticon by occupying or territorialising space – as indicated by the table in Victory Park. Apparently the rural panopticon in Castlemaine doesn’t elicit the same sense of ambivalence as in Maryborough. The following chapter examines young people’s mobility as experienced as a part of their home town.

## Chapter 9. “It feels like Castlemaine is here but also in Melbourne”:

### Train travel and the fluid borders of place

This chapter explores the theme of young people’s mobility as it arose in the photo-elicitation fieldwork as it relates to young people’s place attachment. Initially, this chapter examines the transnational or translocal imagination in young people’s social construction of their home towns. Using an example each from Castlemaine and Maryborough, I demonstrate that young people use global imagery in their social construction of local place, which can positively affect place identification. This is explored as an aspect of mobility emphasising the global networking and sharing of information (rather than the physical movement of people), which in turn affects the ways we socially construct place (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 209). These examples provide a neat reminder that place is not discontinuous (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a) and that the cultures of rural small towns do not sit outside of the global flows of culture and information (Massey, 1998).

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the photo-elicitation research, primarily in Castlemaine, where the train network and services through Castlemaine between Melbourne and Bendigo emerge as a site of significant value for young people. While the railway infrastructure and services could be considered as a structural element of place, the story emerging from the research focuses on the socio-cultural implications of young people’s train use and the ways it affects how they value their home town. By allowing easy connection to the regional city of Bendigo, and to the capital city of Melbourne, the train station is a valuable site for young people in Castlemaine. I will discuss the various ways in which the train station is valued, before building a stronger sense young people’s experience of Castlemaine as a “translocal space” (Low, 2016) – a space in which the distinction between city and country is blurred. The work of this chapter is to help elucidate some of the ways in which young people experience mobility as a part-and-parcel of their experience

of their home town. Even as the train provides a way out of Castlemaine, the value of the train is mostly felt by young people as contributing to a positive relationship with their home town.

### 9.1.1 Theorising mobility

Mobility has achieved widespread attention in contemporary social research. For instance, Urry (2000) has argued that sociology needs to move away from the study of societies, and instead turn to mobility as both symbol and process that are central to social life. Urry suggests that diverse mobilities, including “imaginative travel, movements of images and information, virtuality and physical movement” are at play in “remaking the social” (Urry, 2000, p. 2). Sheller and Urry (2006) argue further that mobility is a new paradigm in social research, which “[...] emphasises that all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections that stretch beyond each such place and mean that nowhere can be an ‘island’” (p. 209). In this sense, it is possible to see how the mobilities turn in is also connected to the social constructionist turn in social sciences more broadly, as outlined in the methodology chapter of this thesis. For example, that cultures and societies do not “occupy naturally discontinuous spaces”, and nor are cultures static, immobile sites of inquiry (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, p. 33). Likewise, Massey (1998) discusses the ways in which youth cultures are globally transferred and argues that a locally-specific cultures are not spatially discrete. The focus on mobility in social research has implications for the ways in which space and place are regarded and emphasised. Commonly cited for his work on globalization, conceptualizing the current age as “liquid modernity”, Bauman (2001) writes of place relations in the contemporary era:

... not just the individual placements in society, but the places in which the individuals may gain access and in which they may wish to settle are melting fast and can hardly serve as targets for life. (p. 146)

Easthope (2009) argues that Bauman's theory of "melting" place, along with other theories of identity in the age of globalisation such as Giddens' (1991) conceptualisation of fluid identities, have been oft misinterpreted – resulting in the assumption that place is no longer a significant base in our identity creation. Easthope (2009) strongly justifies the role of place in our social and subjective worlds and argues that rather than place bearing no significance, the argument is that identities are no longer rooted firmly in a *singular* place. She writes:

Places do not exist independently of our attachments to them... and so long as we exist as physical bodies in the physical world, we will always have some form of attachment to that world and hence, will always create meaningful places.

(Easthope, 2009, p. 66)

A conceptual change regarding the implications of mobility on place attachment has been conceptualised by Gustafson (2014) as a shift from understanding "place as roots" to "place as routes". Routes indicates that a place may include "expressions of a person's individual trajectory and identity, by representing personal development, personal achievement and personal choice rather than roots and continuity" (Gustafson, 2014, p. 39) In a similar sense, Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005) argue that "mobility and stability are reciprocally interrelated" (p. 9). In examining the out-and-return-migration of young people in Tasmania and the relationship between place and identity formation, Easthope (2009) argues that *both* place attachment and mobility are involved in young people's ongoing identity development.

A great deal of mobilities research focuses on urban mobilities, as Sheller and Urry (2006) argue, the city itself can be construed as "travelling" it is partly constructed from the mobile flows of people, goods and information and cannot be assessed without an understanding of these forms of movement and flow (p. 214). Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye (2004) establish mobility (both spatial and social) as a form of capital – but use the term motility to refer to

the *capacity* of an organism to move (separate to its intention to be mobile). To assess motility, researchers need to understand that this form of capital is affected by access, competence and appropriation that is, the way in which an agent might “interpret and act upon perceived or real access and skills” (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004, p. 750). A number of researchers have researched young people’s urban and rural mobility and immobility. Notably, Skelton (2013) argues that examining young people’s mobilities is an important part of mobilities examined as it demonstrates the diversity of experiences of mobility, which can help to elucidate power structures implicated, and also the unequal distribution of mobility as a resource.

Farrugia (2016) uses the phrase “mobility imperative” to understand the processes involved in the mobility and immobility of rural youth. The mobility imperative implies that “rural youth must often be mobile in order to access the resources they need to navigate biographies and construct identities” (Farrugia, 2016, p. 837). In examining the mobility imperative for rural young people, Farrugia (2016) asserts that rural young people’s mobilities are affected by three different kinds of factors – structural (for instance, education and employment), symbolic (for instance, the socially constructed dichotomy between rural and urban), and non-representational (for instance, affective or embodied experiences). While the structural element here is rather instrumental, straightforward, and well documented, the symbolic and non-representational aspects are less so.

The cultural practices and symbolic resources that young people draw upon to construct youthful identities also contribute to the symbolic dimensions of the mobility imperative for rural youth. (Farrugia, 2016, p. 842)

For instance, here Farrugia (2016) explores the discursive construction of the city as youthful, cool and hotspots for cultures and subcultures, whereas the country is constructed in opposition as natural and lacking in cultural forms attractive to young people. For young

people then, who are often developing their subjectivities in accordance with various subcultures, cities are assumed to be attractive propositions as places for young people to develop their identities. This symbolic dichotomy between rural and urban contributes to the mobility imperative for rural young people.

In mobility research generally, and in examining young people's mobility specifically, it is also important to examine movement in conjunction with lack of movement, especially as it helps in revealing the unequal distribution of resources. For instance, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) argue that young people's sense of inclination towards and capacity to be both socially and spatially mobile is deeply affected by socioeconomic factors at play in their home locality. Likewise, Marzi (2017) articulates that spatial mobility-as-capital and immobility-lack-of-capital is deeply related to young people's aspirations towards or chances of social mobility.

I will now attend to the theme of the transnational or translocal as it arose in the photo-elicitation research. This examines the ways in which the local small town is socially constructed with elements of global space.

## 9.2 Transnational imaginations

This section discusses a theme that emerged from the research that contributes to contemporary understandings of place as connected, non-discrete and non-bounded (for example Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a; Low, 2016; Massey, 1998; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Low (2016) uses the term "translocal space" to describe spaces that become connected and superimposed upon one another, through "space-time compression" (p. 175). Building on this sense of translocal space, research participants in both Maryborough and Castlemaine elicited responses that are worth sharing in illustrating the sense of mediated global space – and how a sense of the global actually contributes to a local attachment. In Castlemaine, Eli has a transnational imagination and understanding of place which directly impacts his

relationship with his home town. Here Eli discusses his photograph of a bridge in Castlemaine [photograph 3j2, pictured overleaf].

**Eli:** *It's a white bridge, I usually go down the white bridge, it's a shortcut to go into town.*

**Ember:** *And what are those little padlocks on the bridge?*

**Eli:** *Yes, I noticed them a long time ago. They're there to lock away secrets of couples.*

**Ember:** *Secrets of couples?*

**Eli:** *Yeah.*

**Ember:** *Oh, so is it a romance bridge?*

**Eli:** *Yes well it's actually based on the same bridge in Paris.*

**Ember:** *So do you like those padlocks?*

**Eli:** *Yep.*

**Ember:** *Is that why you took the photo?*

**Eli:** *Yeah. I took the photo because it reminds me of the actual place in Paris.*

**Ember:** *Have you been there before?*

**Eli:** *No, I just know that place because I've seen it in another film.*





*Photograph 44 Castlemaine, Eli, 3j2*

The notion of the padlock being used to “lock away secrets of couples” adds a significant mystique and aura to the place, which is keenly felt for Eli. The padlocks secured to the bridge are situated on a mundane walk between home and town. The simple appearance of some padlocks on a bridge for Eli, becomes a symbol through which a global urban locality can be cognitively superimposed upon a small town in central Victoria. This finding reflects Leyshon’s study of rural young people in the UK, in which he identifies that rural young people’s identities “are produced through an infusion of locally (rural) and globally (urban) mediated culture(s)...” (Leyshon, 2008, p. 22). So the sense of place experienced by Eli, depicted in the photograph above, is at once local and global. Through reference points from film the padlocks on the bridge create a transnational connection between home in Castlemaine and the *Pont des Arts* in Paris.

By engaging in metropolitan youth cultures, rural young people develop “mobile youth imaginaries”, which are “constructed through investments across multiple spaces, with urban spaces acting as a home for young people’s identities even as they remain within their

rural locale” (Farrugia, 2016, p. 843). In Maryborough, a similar notion emerges from the photo-elicitation research with Bobby. Except for Bobby it is not urban youth cultures that create a transnational investment in local place, but rather a cinematic connection. In discussing the heritage streetscape in Maryborough, and his photograph [1e5 pictured below], he articulates how the town’s heritage fabric becomes a symbol, connecting him to global cultural forms.



Photograph 45 Maryborough, Bobby, 1e5

**Bobby:** *Um... I just like how it’s, in Maryborough you walk around and you see a lot of the old buildings, some of them have been repainted and re-done up, but you still see a lot of the old look and stuff and I like that about Maryborough. If you step into it you kind of create into an old Western scene looking down High Street with all the old buildings and stuff.*

Here the heritage streetscape is not valued so much for its links to central Victorian goldfields history, but perhaps for a global sense of frontier history as depicted on film. The place identity is constructed through a merging of local built heritage, global gold rush

history and cinematic history. Here Bobby explicitly refers to the construction of Maryborough as a transnational, mediated space: “you kind of create into an old Western scene”, the heritage streetscape in Maryborough allows Bobby to transpose global space upon his small town through American Western cinematic representations. In this instance, the particular content or story of the local heritage form is not important for Bobby in and of itself, but rather it is the mobile, transnational imaginary that allows him to invest positively in his town in this manner.

In their cultural analysis of Australian rural space, Gorman-Murray, Darian Smith and C. Gibson (2006) propose a multi-scalar approach to analysing the rural, which incorporates global, national, regional, local and individual/bodily elements in reading the rural. This provides a useful means for interpreting Bobby’s and Eli’s imaginings of transnational space within the local spaces of their home towns. The global scale of rural Australia can be examined through the context of global social, environmental and economic history. In exploring rural Australia at the global scale, in part, rural Australia is constructed and conceptualised through worldwide historical context, and the circulation of imagery of rural Australia globally (p. 41). Whereas, the research findings here illustrate that young people are constructing their local rural Australian home towns by incorporating elements from other places globally, into their local sense of place. The global scale of conceiving rural Australia then, occurs through a two-way dynamic.

Gorman-Murray, Darian Smith and C. Gibson (2006) also make a case for a multi-scalar approach to considering rural Australia – understanding space from the bodily scale to the global, which is also clearly articulated through Bobby’s discussion here. As Bobby describes the bodily act of “stepping into” the street, cognitively compressing time and space to impose a global cinematic imaginary into his home town. Thus, the heritage fabric of the streetscape enables Bobby to construct his home town on an individual scale, through his own knowledge and experience of particular films, on a bodily scale through “stepping into”

it, while simultaneously imposing global film-historical associations into the local experience of place.

The two examples provided in here demonstrate how mobility is achieved not necessarily through physical movement, but also through the global spread of information. Both Bobby in Maryborough and Eli in Castlemaine are able to superimpose global film localities onto their home town, and this positively affects their experience of the place.

### 9.3 Castlemaine's trains

The next theme surrounding mobility to arise from the photo-elicitation research is railway transport as a means for young people to experience spatial mobility. While in Maryborough, a significant proportion of the photo-elicitation participants photographed the railway station, only one of these described using the train as a means of transport. Rather, as illustrated in Chapter 6, the Maryborough Railway Station is valued as an iconic heritage form, as well as a place to go for coffee. The Castlemaine Railway Station was also photographed repeatedly (by seven out of twelve Castlemaine participants). However, in this case the reasoning for photographing the station relates predominantly to its function rather than the grand historicism of the building.

Here I examine the different ways in which young people in Castlemaine value the rail network as a part of their home town. Using the ethnographic photo-elicitation research, I illustrate the site provides a safe space for young people to practice their mobility, progressing from train travel to the nearby regional city of Bendigo, to train travel to the capital city of Melbourne. For the majority of the participants who photographed the Castlemaine Railway Station, the site provides a means of getting out of town to other places (mainly Bendigo and Melbourne) as well as home again.

All but one of the participants who discuss using the train describe it as a positive element of Castlemaine, which contributes to the way they value their home town. Duncan is the only

photo-elicitation participants who has thoroughly negative attitudes towards his home town. Duncan perceives Castlemaine as unappealing, lacking in decent, affordable takeaway food and entertainment options. He is independently mobile on foot throughout the town and describes walking with friends as his principal social entertainment activity. He uses the train occasionally for getting to Bendigo with friends for leisure and recreation activities. However, his reasoning for photographing the railway station [photograph 3d26], discussed here is more sarcastic:

**Duncan:** *Well, there was a while where I was looking at the list [of suggested types of places to photograph] and was like, where would I take someone who had never been to Castlemaine before, and this was half a joke I said take them straight to the station. So the idea was, well I don't know how well could you explain to me what you think I might be saying if I would take someone anywhere in Castlemaine I would take them straight to the station.*

**Ember:** *To say goodbye?*

**Duncan:** *[laughs] yeah, pretty much.*

**Ember:** *Send them back on their way again?*

**Duncan:** *Yep, pretty much.*

**Ember:** *Why do you think that?*

**Duncan:** *I mean Castlemaine has terrible pizza. I has terrible pizza. It's expensive pizza and there's just expensive food everywhere. Except Tender Chook is pretty good.*

So Duncan's facetious insinuation is that Castlemaine is not a place worth visiting, and the best thing he could do for a visitor is provide them with a way back out. While providing a somewhat sarcastic response to the photo-elicitation participants' photo prompt sheet, his

photograph and comments do iterate that the train station is valued as a site that enables a way out of the small town. In probing for reasons for this, and his generally negative opinion of the town throughout the interview, he repeatedly refers to the available take away food in Castlemaine being either of poor quality or too expensive. Instead, he orientates toward the regional city of Bendigo for dining, retail and leisure. However, Duncan does not articulate in the interview a desire to live in Bendigo, or indeed a desire to live anywhere specific. Instead he states:

**Duncan:** *I don't know, everywhere sort of sucks. Yeah. And I might hang around in Castlemaine for a while and then move to wherever. Maybe I'll move to a mountain and live in a cave and just play music.*

It is clear from the interview that Duncan gravitates towards Bendigo for his leisure time. He prefers going to particular establishments in Bendigo for pizza and burgers due to price and quality. He will also travel to Bendigo with friends and/or his brothers for clothes shopping and entertainment activities like movie-going. In this case, it appears that for Duncan, even though he indicates he might “move to a mountain and live in a cave”, the smallness of the town and the associated limited options for things like takeaway food, clothes stores, cinemas, does in fact impact negatively on his relationship with the place. However, the presence of the railway station and associated rail services between Castlemaine and Bendigo assist in easing the burden of living in a place he feels low attachment to.

Other participants in the research had more overtly personal reasons for photographing the train station. For instance, Grace discusses her photograph [3k10, pictured overleaf], eliciting a personal history of using the train for travel to Bendigo.

**Grace:** *That's on the train to Bendigo. I feel like that was significant because, growing up in Castlemaine, you've got the Theatre Royal and stuff like that but if you really want to go anywhere between the ages of like thirteen and fifteen you can*

*only go to Bendigo 'cause Melbourne's too big and scary. And so like you'd catch the train up to Bendigo and hang out at the Market place and watch a movie or something like that. And that train ride has never changed it's always been exactly the same, like the scenery hasn't changed all my life.*



*Photograph 46 Castlemaine, Grace, 3k10*

Here Grace clearly articulates that the train from Castlemaine provides young people with a space for staged spatial independence. While Melbourne is described as too large and possibly dangerous for a young teenager to visit independently, convenient access by train to Bendigo provides a middle ground between the small town of Castlemaine and the big city of Melbourne. In Bendigo young people can hang out independently and can access shops, eateries, and entertainment that aren't available in a small town setting. Here Grace also notes the unchanging and scenic nature of the travel between her home town and Bendigo indicating that the train travel provides an aesthetically pleasing and comfortable journey. Sheller and Urry (2006), discuss the importance of immobile infrastructure (such as railway lines, roads, airports, cables) in enabling the mobility of human beings (p. 211).

While the immobility and constancy of the scenery outside the mobile train does not physically facilitate the young person's mobility, it nevertheless contributes to feelings of safety, familiarity and accessibility, enabling an ease of the young person's mobility. Thus, through its familiarity the stable environment outside the train, perceived as unchanging, helps to make for an easy transition for Grace in exploring youthful, gradually progressive independent spatial mobility.

While for a number of participants, train travel to Bendigo arose as an accessible and decent option for accessing weekend leisure and entertainment with friends, none of the participants talk excitedly or passionately about accessing Bendigo for leisure. Regardless of this, features such as food, clothes shopping, hanging out, and cinema are all regular sites and activities for young people to attract them to the nearby regional city. Bendigo is referenced as having more options for these than in Castlemaine. For instance, Bodhi uses the train to visit Bendigo with friends. His reasoning for visiting Bendigo is predominantly focused on the size of the regional city and the number of options for cinema and clothes shopping.

**Bodhi:** *[discussing photograph 3n3, pictured overleaf] Well, I do use it probably often just to get to Bendigo. Just with friends if we wanted to go to the movies. Because Castlemaine does have a theatre but not as many of the movies get played there. I go there for a lot of clothes shopping because, there is stuff in Castlemaine but, it's good having another option for that. And to just hang out with friends on the weekend.*

Again, as with Grace and Duncan, for Bodhi Bendigo provides an accessible and decent option for accessing weekend leisure and entertainment with friends.





*Photograph 47 Castlemaine, Bodhi, 3n3*

This is also exemplified by Eli, whose photographs contain two shots of the train station [pictured overleaf in 3j9 and in 3j10 in Appendix B]. Eli catches the train regularly to go to Bendigo for his Certificate in Dance and to Melbourne to dance with his dance crew, a Victorian based dance school for teens and adults living with Down syndrome. Public transport is vital for people living with Down syndrome, given the syndrome generally forms a barrier to gaining a drivers' licence (Scott, Foley, Bourke, Leonard, & Girdler, 2014). Scott *et al.* (2014) argue that independent mobility through the use of public transport then impacts positively on the subjective well-being of people with Down syndrome. Eli lives semi-independently in a studio on his mother's property. While he is assisted by personal support workers for activities like shopping and cooking, the train enables him independent travel in and out of Castlemaine to access activities like social connections that aren't present in his small hometown. The train enables an enlarging of the home town and a blending or blurring of the edge of the home town with other spaces. While Eli really enjoys the

familiarity and comfort of the small town of Castlemaine, the train enables him to mobilise easily and comfortably between Castlemaine, Bendigo and Melbourne.



Photograph 48 Castlemaine, Eli, 3j9

Julia and Dominic, also both photographed the train station, but their focus in the interview centres on accessing transport to Melbourne rather than to Bendigo. For Dominic there is a definite pull towards Melbourne specifically for nightlife. Here he discusses photograph of the Railway Station [pictured in Appendix B, 3i15].

**Dominic:** *And the [photograph] number 15 is from the old Gaol looking down at the train station. I wanted a picture of the train station because always on the weekend we would, like, go out to Melbourne to have that escape from the town.*

**Ember:** *So would you go to Melbourne if you wanted to have more of a night life?*

**Dominic:** *Yeah definitely. Here is good in the fact that like, you can go to a party it will just be real chilled and relaxing but like to Melbourne it's just such more of a hyped-up, experimental, party scene.*

While the pull towards Melbourne for Dominic has not emerged out of a complete dissatisfaction with what's on offer in Castlemaine, there is a definite excitement present in having a night out in Melbourne. This excitement is a feeling which is not present in the prospect of nights out in Dominic's small home town. The sheer numbers of people, different tastes and subcultures present in the city allow for a far more exciting time than the familiar, small town of Castlemaine. We can see that the symbolic construction of the urban as associated with youth cultures – indicated by a “hyped-up experimental party scene” is a key aspect of encouraging Dominic's mobility in a sense that relates to Farrugia's (2016) mobility imperative. Julia also has a sense of excitement in visiting Melbourne by train. Here she discusses the reasoning behind taking her photograph of a train on the platform [pictured overleaf in 3f15].

**Julia:** *Um, well if you're going to Melbourne or even if you're going to Bendigo, you're doing something fun – like heading up to Melbourne for a party say, or something like that. Yeah. And it's just I can catch the train any time.*

Julia's reasoning for photographing the railway station is similar to Dominic's – the station is a local place of significance for enabling access to Melbourne for fun and nightlife. However, Julia also suggests she perceives a merging of Castlemaine and Melbourne. Even in explaining what she appreciates about living in Castlemaine, one of the reasons she gives is “...it's so close to Melbourne as well. Yeah, like it's a really quick train ride.” The places aren't fully distinct for her. Here she states quite explicitly a cognitive merging of the two places.



*Photograph 49 Castlemaine, Julia, 3f15*

**Ember:** *And so do you think – you just said that it’s about accessing fun things. But is that about things that you can’t get in Castlemaine – or that wouldn’t be as fun as if they were in Castlemaine? Or is it something else?*

**Julia:** *I don’t really think about it in that way, I’m not going away because Castlemaine isn’t good enough. It feels – yeah I don’t really think about it geographically. It feels like Castlemaine is here but also in Melbourne. Because I know people in both places, and I spend time in both places.*

Clearly there is an easy and regular flow of people between Castlemaine and Melbourne, indicating that there is not a distinct separation of space felt in Castlemaine. Further on in the interview, Julia also mentions that her brother and a number of her friends from Castlemaine live in Melbourne, and states that she goes to Melbourne regularly to visit people from Castlemaine. Similarly to Julia, Alex also discusses having strong, continuing Castlemaine connections in Melbourne both in the past when he was living in Melbourne and in the present when he visits Melbourne. In a sense this relates to the concept of

translocal space discussed in the previous section of this chapters. The continuous movement of people between Castlemaine and Melbourne allows the drawing out of Castlemaine into Melbourne, and the drawing out of Melbourne into Castlemaine. This is observed in news and tourism media such as this excerpt below:

Castlemaine has become such a magnet for the funky and urbane it's now commonly called north Northcote, such is its allure with inner Melburnians, who have moved there in droves in recent years (Hudson, 2014).

It certainly appears to be the case in Castlemaine that in the formation of their subjectivities, young people can draw on *both* their attachment to their home town of Castlemaine, and upon their movement and travel between Castlemaine and more urban places like Bendigo and Melbourne (Easthope, 2009). In this sense, young people in Castlemaine experience what Murdoch and Day (1998) describe as a "hybrid mode of rurality" (p. 193). The research in this chapter indicates that Castlemaine is socially produced, constructed and experienced as networked and connected, with fluid borders and easy flow between Castlemaine and Bendigo, and between Castlemaine and Melbourne.

The Castlemaine Railway Station and its trains are a site high in value for young people. The physical infrastructure and services of the railway are valued as providing a comfortable and accessible means of gaining gradual, spatial independence and autonomous mobility. This ease of accessibility to Bendigo and Melbourne, is valued as a vital aspect of Castlemaine itself. The train contributes to young people's positive experience of place, even while being used to transport people away from place. Through the means of the train, young people value Castlemaine as a connected, networked space with fluid borders. The place itself, and attachment to it, is enhanced by this fluid border enabled by the train.

### 9.3.1 A brief reflection on relative immobility in Maryborough

This chapter has focused on young people's physical mobility as well as their imaginative mobility – or the translocal or transnational imagination, which allows young people to incorporate other places and spaces into their local experience through global flows of information and people. Allen and Hollingworth (2013) explore mobility as “not simply about the physical moving of people between places, but linked to contemporary economies of selfhood and relations of power” (p. 500). The term “sticky” is used to describe limited physical and social mobility as it applies to research on young people's aspirations (2013). In examining the social and spatial factors at play in this context, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) write:

Indeed, mobility is central to the creation of the metropolitan habitus and to the production of creative worker subjectivities – oriented around flexibility, enterprise and willingness to move for work. Rootedness to place is thus antithetical to the kinds of subjects demanded by the creative economy and associated with, or productive of, creative places. (p. 501)

In this sense, and for young people in Castlemaine, mobility, enabled through the railway can be clearly seen as a resource which enables access to further capitals. The train allows the accrual of cultural capital and experience from outside the bounds of the small town. Train travel, or indeed any public transport travel rarely arose in the photo-elicitation research in Maryborough. Sara uses the train to travel to visit her friends in a nearby town between Maryborough and Ballarat. Other participants, when asked directly if they would catch the train to Ballarat or to Melbourne for a day all responded negatively. Lola explicitly states the issue in responding to my question what do you feel is a negative thing about living in a small town:

**Lola:** *With Maryborough, they've only got one train to Ballarat and one train back a day. So, if you need to go to Ballarat, you have to get up at six am and then, catch that train and then you're stuck in Ballarat until like four, five o'clock at night.*

In Castlemaine, it is clear that the infrastructure and services of the train caters for gradual, increasing spatial mobility of young people. Castlemaine is serviced by rail between Melbourne and Bendigo every forty minutes to hourly, seven days per week. Whereas, Maryborough, being on a subsidiary line for onward travel from Ballarat, is serviced by just two rail and one coach service each direction on weekdays and one rail and one coach service in each direction on weekends. Furthermore, as rail services to Maryborough ceased in the 1990s, being reinstated in 2013, this long period with no rail services is likely to have impacted the mentality of Maryborough residents as non-train users. It may take some time for the culture in Maryborough to adapt to re-normalise the regular use of the train. So if physical mobility is seen as capital (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2004), it is important to examine its unequal distribution and then how that may affect the potential for social mobility (Allen & Hollingworth, 2013; Kaufmann *et al.*, 2004; Marzi, 2017; Skelton, 2013).

#### 9.4 Conclusion

The structural spatial element of the train clearly has social and cultural implications for how young people socially construct their home town of Castlemaine as unbounded, networked; and catering for fluid transitions to other spaces for the acquisition of cultural capital through consumption and experiences. Far from being seen as merely a way out of Castlemaine, the train enhances Castlemaine itself. In this sense, the mobility afforded to young people in Castlemaine sits well with Gieling, Vermeij and Haartsen's (2017) proposition that mobility "does not weaken people-place relationships but may provide rural residents with opportunities to become attached to their villages in myriad ways and degrees" (p. 237). It is highly likely that the mobility capital afforded to young people in

Castlemaine contributes to an increased sense of young people's spatial agency within the town in addition to outside of town. In easily being able to catch the train to bigger cities, young people can practice behavioural and identity performance in a safe space outside the watchful eye of the close community. Easily accessed, Bendigo may provide a testing ground for practicing spatial behaviours, which can then be brought back to their home towns.

Whereas, as we have seen in Maryborough, the rural panopticon appears to diminish young people's spatial agency within their home town, which, in turn, leads to the experience of Maryborough as boring. If mobility capital were increased in Maryborough through increased train services, it would be interesting to see if young people's sense of spatial agency throughout the town would also be increased.



## Chapter 10. “Two totally different vibes”: Social value and social class in Castlemaine

The decision to adopt Castlemaine as a case study town for this thesis was driven by two almost conflicting agendas. First, I wanted to test whether growing up in a small town with ample access to the cultural capital of the creative class would increase the likelihood of young people’s positive place attachment and therefore decrease the likelihood of their outmigration. Second, and I wanted to test the argument that a creative migration approach to regional development can cause social dislocation (Waitt & C. Gibson, 2009, p. 1228). This chapter of the thesis examines notions of social class as emerged through the photo-elicitation research. Here social class has been expressed through social value, moral judgments and cultural consumption by young people in Castlemaine. The fieldwork research in Maryborough did not elicit data that allows for a direct comparison around this topic. This chapter first examines Castlemaine young people’s cultural consumption preferences, identifying an apparent alignment with Florida’s (2002) creative classes – identified through a preference for “authentic” consumption experiences and a dislike of mass-produced goods. Just as Florida (2002) argues that the creative classes desire to actively invest in place, contributing to the shaping of place in order to reflect their own values and identity (p. 230), we will see that young people’s place relationships in Castlemaine also appear to benefit from the reflection of subjective values in place. This appears to deepen the strength and depth of connection with place for the young participants in my study.

The chapter then moves on to discuss one of the key issues in Castlemaine that was identified in the *Bol de Contexte* chapter of this thesis. That is, the existence of a cultural and class division amongst Castlemaine residents, which could be viewed in light of the social dislocation between those aligned with the creative classes and more established,

traditionally rural segments of the community. This chapter then examines Castlemaine young people's perceptions of this community dichotomy, with a particular focus on cultural capital, and how this affects their connection to their home town in diverse ways.

An important aspect of this cultural approach to class is based on the notion of value.

Understandings of value usually fit within either economics or moral philosophy in which value is a matter of remarkably precise measurement calculation (quantification) or notoriously slippery, via moral understandings of what matters to people – values (qualification).” (Skeggs & Loveday, 2012, p. 475)

As articulated in the quote above, value can be defined either in very precise or imprecise terms. As with Hollingworth and Williams (2009, p. 468), after Skeggs (2004a), the work of this chapter is embedded in a “cultural approach to class”, focusing on the ways in which class is embedded in identities and cultural practices rather than economic status or type of employment.

### 10.1 Self-reflexive consumption

A focus on subjective values arose in the fieldwork in Castlemaine, particularly around consumption preferences and practices. The findings here, reveal complex and at times contradictory standpoints held by the research participants. For Florida (2002), the creative class is made up of a range of people who actually have a diverse range of jobs and economic resources, including IT professionals, architects, scientists, artists and – the key correlator being that their job involves a level of creativity and thinking (p. 68). Florida argues that, even when members of the creative class may not see that they would be in the same class as other members, they share a set of similar tastes and cultural preferences which give them coherence as a class. Creative class values include individuality, personal achievement and diversity and openness (Florida, 2002, p. 70). Places that enable people to strengthen and enhance their “identities as creative people” attract the creative class, so a

“distinctive character” and authenticity are privileged over commercial franchises major shopping centres (Florida, 2002, p. 15).

The photo-elicitation participants in Castlemaine generally reflected a coherence with creative class values within their consumption choices. Participants indicate a preference for small, unique and family run businesses including local, hand crafted, vintage and second-hand products, which reflect values and imbue social status. For instance, Dominic discusses his photograph of an Opportunity Shop [pictured below in 3i2]:



Photograph 50 Castlemaine, Dominic, 3i12

**Dominic:** *And number 12 not very sharp but that's at Salvos that's at the top end of town, and everyone in my friendship group always go op shopping all the time like the whole outfits ... Yeah, it's more like, my social group we kind of don't see the need in going out and purchasing brand new things anymore like the commercial side of that we kind of boycott as well. So we always get second hand and we always share clothes like "can I borrow this shirt" or "can I borrow this or that"?*

So for Dominic, choosing to purchase clothes at second hand stores and sharing clothes between friends is an active political decision – to not support commercial enterprise, to reuse goods and to share goods. Here Dominic’s quest for authenticity and embracing of an anti-commercial sentiment extends to preferring second-hand and privileging sharing – reflecting a socio-political standpoint but also a sense of self-statement and distinction that aligns with creative class values.

In valuing small business in his home town, Bodhi also reflects a similar socio-political values base to Dominic. Here Bodhi discusses his photograph [3n4, pictured below].



Photograph 51 Castlemaine, Bodhi, 3n4

**Bodhi:** *And number 4 is a street in Castlemaine which I really like, because it just has a lot of restaurants and family businesses along there. So there is “Taste of the Orient”, which is a family business I just think it’s a great street because that’s one of the other things I like about Castlemaine is just the amount of, you know, small businesses, family businesses, restaurants, Cafés, stuff like that... Yeah, I guess it’s good to have a lot of like, kind of family businesses rather than just like, you know,*

*McDonalds, KFC, subway, or not just those options. Obviously there is a few of those options in Castlemaine and there is small businesses in the city as well, but I just think that's a great street 'cause it has lots of great food.*

Similarly to Dominic's opting to purchase clothes from opportunity shops, Bodhi's appreciation of these family-run eateries in Castlemaine emanates from a socio-political standpoint. He values and actively supports small, local, family run business in opposition to big, national or multinational franchises. Here Dominic and Bodhi's preferences are strongly aligned with Florida's (2002) articulation of the preferences of the creative class – namely around authenticity. Whereas “a place full of chain stores, chain restaurants and nightclubs is not authentic: not only do these venues look pretty much the same everywhere, they offer the same experience you could have anywhere” (Florida, 2002, p. 229). In saying this, however, contradictions also arise in regard to the reality of being a young person in a rural town. In another part of the interview, when asked what he thought was a negative thing about living in a small town as opposed to a city, Bodhi cites the lack big commercial business, which he sees as making it difficult for young people to find employment:

**Bodhi:** *Looking for jobs can be a bit of a struggle in Castlemaine, because there's not enough as much around like big franchises that hire lots of people apart from the IGA. Maybe Target and Domino's now that they're here. So we do have a couple more which is giving a couple more opportunities for young people to get jobs but, I think it would be a bit easier in the city to find jobs.*

Bodhi's apparently contradictory statement here helps to illustrate the complexities of growing up in a small town and finding a balance between structural imperatives – like having limited work experience and finding low-skill employment – and the values-base of authenticity. In this sense, the structural aspect of employment options is valued in a very

different sense to the values-based consumption choices that provides a positive form of spatial engagement in Castlemaine, engendering a strong sense of place attachment.

As well as retail shops, markets also feature as a consumption space that aids in engendering positive place relations among several of the Castlemaine research participants. There are three regular markets that occur in Castlemaine, an artist's market, a farmers' market and the weekly, long-standing Wesley Hill Market – which is a mixed market of food, produce, craft and second-hand items. Lizzie talks very fondly of all three markets, especially the Wesley Hill Market.

**Lizzie:** *The other place that I ran out of film for but I would have included is the Wesley Hill market, which I would have loved to include because I think that's a really special thing that happens in Castlemaine. And also the Farmers and the Artist's markets. Those three markets are very special. I will make the effort to go every week to the Wesley Hill market and I would go with my parents when I was a kid. It's just a really lovely market, special.*

Lizzie's positive association with the Wesley Hill Market has grown through a long-term, regular engagement with this weekly event. The market provides a space for shopping, but also for its authenticity, it is "special" because of the combination of people, products, music and food which creates an ambience that draws people like Lizzy in. Likewise, Naomi also discussed the markets in Castlemaine as appealing regular events. Here she discusses her photographs taken at Wesley Hill Market [pictured overleaf in 3h9 and 3h10]:

**Naomi:** [3h9] *So that's at the Wesley Hill Market and that's just like a little record stall, so that's something I like about like having little markets and things around is you can always find little treasures and things. Yeah it's just a good place to discover things I guess...*

The notion of discovery here is important for Naomi as, initially in the interview when asked if she likes living in Castlemaine, her response illustrated an ambivalence towards her hometown. It emerged that most of her experiences of Castlemaine are positive, but she sees it as limiting in terms of new experiences. The Wesley Hill Market then, is able to offer her a space in which there is the opportunity for the regular event to reveal new things, inspire new interests and spark new projects. Naomi visits the market regularly with a group of her friends and describes this as a “nice little tradition”. On asking her further about what is good about the market, her response concerns the opportunities for “local makers” to be able to present and sell their work:

**Naomi:** [discussing photographs 3h9 and 3h10, pictured overleaf] *It's just good to – you know we've got a very strong art community here, so at markets and stuff it's good to see that come out, and that you know local makers and stuff are supported and can sell their work and stuff. It's good to see.*

**Ember:** *And so on a more personal basis how does that affect you?*

**Naomi:** *Um, well, I'm sort of interested in um creative things I guess, so it's nice to know that there's a sort of an audience for that, and if I was to make something that people would be interested in it.*

Naomi's statements here illustrate how a simple thing like a market *aligns* with her values and identity, providing her with a sense of agency or opportunity and being valued within her home town. Significantly, this contrasts with Mark's sentiments discussed in Chapter 6, about his chosen art form of street art not being valued by people in his home town of Maryborough and feeling limited by the lack of alternative outlets for creative expression.



Photograph 52 Castlemaine, Naomi, 3h9



Photograph 53 Castlemaine, Naomi, 3h10



These illustrations of a preference for authentic and distinctive consumption experiences demonstrate an alignment of these young people in Castlemaine and Florida's creative class. The consumption preferences discussed here are embedded with subjective and moral judgments. As H el ene Cherrier (2007) argues, consumption practices can be bound up in both self-expression and external recognition. She argues that the way that people choose what to buy and from where demonstrates a range of ethical decisions people make based on their knowledge of the environment, production practices, or support of local businesses (p. 321). While consumption based on morality is often understood to be an individualistic endeavour, Cherrier takes issue with the argument that the practice is wholly explainable by a neoliberal conception of the individualistic consumer (p. 322). Importantly, Cherrier argues that "the key reference points for constructing ethical consumption lifestyles come from not only the inside (self-identity) but also from the outside (collective identity)" (p. 324). Here Naomi and Lizzie describe a form of nonpecuniary, inconspicuous consumption, which they both feel demonstrates collective care and value, rather than a neoliberal means of externalising classed subjectivities.

**Naomi:** *[3h4] That's just a little – around town there's a few little planter box things, and I'm not sure if it's that exact one but I think some of them you can just go and plant something and people can go and take stuff as well. I'm not exactly sure how it works but it's nice to see that sort of sharing attitude in the community, with things like that. And there's a lot of focus on like organic food and sustainability and all of that kind of stuff, which is good.*

**Ember:** *How does it make you feel to have that? Does it give you sense of pride or connection, or like is it about a shared value that you have, or something else?*

**Naomi:** *Yeah probably, and it's just good to know that people around you care about that sort of thing and there's people looking out for you.*



*Photograph 54, Castlemaine, Naomi, 3h4*



*Photograph 55, Castlemaine, Lizzie, 3l22*

**Ember:** *And do you feel like it um, you know does it sort of relate to your values to be able to have that in your town?*

**Lizzie:** *Yeah, I think it's really important. I think all these people driving past and seeing all of these beautiful garden beds on the street is really important. Because even if it's not something that they're going to do, it just puts it in their head that it is an option, that growing your own food is an option, and you don't just have to go to the supermarket and buy it. And of course just slightly further up the road is green goes the grocer which is one of the local organic food shops. And yeah, all of this being in the same area I think is really important... I think it's just a really nice little hub of kind of organic, alternative food.*

For Naomi and Lizzie, the existence of these planter boxes embody a sense of collectively held social and environmental values, which ultimately contributes to a positive, subjective identification with place. This phenomenon is perhaps also at odds with Florida's (2002) conceptualisation of the creative class which is enabled by weaker social ties and individualistic endeavours (pp. 269-270).

As we have seen, Duncan appears to enjoy being contrary and generally provides a contrasting voice to the majority of the Castlemaine participants. Here he discusses his photograph of the Theatre Royal [3d7, pictured overleaf], a place which he associates with the "cliquey" element of Castlemaine. As discussed in Chapter 6, many of the Castlemaine participants photographed the Theatre to illustrate a positive association with place, either through nostalgia, or contemporary nightlife. Duncan's photograph, on the other hand, was taken with the intent of conveying a negative value associated with place. His discussion of the photograph focuses on the sign at the front, which is for a community-led solar bulk-buy program called MASH.



Photograph 56 Castlemaine, Duncan, 3d7



Photograph 57 Castlemaine, Duncan, 3d10

**Duncan:** *Yep, and also the MASH solar bulk buy thing, sort of like “let’s buy solar panels woohoo”, which I really hope is something that is just put forth by people who sell solar panels. I really hope it is.*

**Ember:** *What do you mean?*

**Duncan:** *Well the idea is that the people who are selling solar panels are saying “you guys should buy solar panels” so they can sell solar panels. I hope that rather than people thinking “we should buy solar panels, be green, save the planet!”*

**Ember:** *So that’s not a concept that resonates with you?*

**Duncan:** *No. The way that Castlemaine does it is in almost a slactivist way. They’re the kind of people that will go, “I’m going to change my Facebook profile picture to a picture of a cake to help fight obesity”. Do you see what I’m saying, like you can change your profile picture to a cake but it doesn’t do anything.*

So Duncan critiques the cultural capital of the creative class of Castlemaine – seeing a community campaign for residential solar panels as more of external expression of joining a bandwagon, rather than something that might come from a genuine personal commitment. The notion of a solar bulk buy does not connect to Duncan’s personal values or his own sense of cultural capital. In fact, he sees a hypocrisy in it – as he discusses his next photograph [3d10, pictured on the preceding page]:

**Duncan:** *Oh it’s a picture of all of the rubbish. To contrast this picture I guess, the “we should be green, go for solar bulk buy” and then literally twenty metres away I just found a ditch full of rubbish.*

Duncan clearly feels cynical about the community environmental consciousness made visible in Castlemaine through initiatives like the MASH solar bulk buy program, insinuating that it is not supported by a genuine commitment, but is rather an externalised expression of a

classed cultural capital. In this way, Duncan perceives ethical consumption as an individualised endeavour, linked with an argument that Cherrier (2007) debates – that ethical consumption arises from an individualistic, neoliberal base. While ethical consumption can be adopted with the intent of resisting mainstream commercial forces, it could also indeed be perpetuating class stratification.

M. Gibson and Moore (2018) apply a Bourdieusian approach to the field of limited production, arguing that the distinction made by the bourgeois in their preferring of rarefied or limited field of goods is fuelled by a romanticised notion that such products lie outside the world of commercial enterprise.

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field of restricted production as 'the economy turned upside down' is valuable in understanding not just the ultimate economic value that can accrue to art created with an avant-garde field, but value to bourgeois consumers of the romantic discourse promoted within that field about autonomy from market imperatives. (M. Gibson & Moore, 2018, p. 150)

The fact the ethical consumption is considered a growth market helps to reinforce the notion that limited production is not outside of market imperatives {Adams, 2010 #735, p. 257}.

Currid-Halkett (2017) presents a theory of what she terms the aspirational class – a highly educated group of people who place high stock in consumption focused on social or environmental benefit, privileging things such as locally-produced, handmade, and organic. While Currid-Halkett's work is from an American context, and at times oddly specific about consumption tropes that she assigns to the aspirational class, there are certainly elements that appear to ring true with the photo-elicitation findings in Castlemaine. "For the aspirational class the choice of particular fabrics, wood, or foodstuffs has to do with acquiring knowledge of what is superior, more environmentally friendly, and more humane"

(p. 56). In this sense, moral judgements around social or environmental value become a part of cultural capital and are thus related to social class. Electing to acquire cultural capital as signifiers of social and environmental values relates to middle-class resources of elite education:

Even if they have full-time careers, the attainment of such knowledge implies that they either have the conspicuous leisure time to read or stroll farmer's [sic] markets, or that they value the acquisition of this type of information as a worthy use of their time. (Currid-Halkett, 2017, p. 53)

Skeggs and Loveday (2012) likewise argue that the self-reflexivity required for people to make subjective, values-based investments in place is a result of middle-class resources, such as education and cultural capital (p. 487). Hence with the cohort photographs and reflections on values-based consumption discussed above, we can see that these self-reflexive choices around consumption are likely to be the result of access to these resources. The majority of research participants in Castlemaine demonstrated a romantic, middle class preference for cultural goods outside the sphere of mass production, they also provided an acute understanding of the class struggle at play in their town – as demonstrated most clearly from a recent community debate about a new Domino's franchise, discussed in the last part of this chapter. This now leads to the second part of this chapter, which examines whether the creative class migration and subsequent gentrification of Castlemaine has led to social dislocation.

## 10.2 “Two completely different vibes”: discursive reflections on a dichotomous community

As articulated in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the stakeholders interviewed in Castlemaine invariably describe a community made up of two main groups with very different cultural expectations. In carrying out the photo-elicitation fieldwork with young people in

Castlemaine, I was interested to see to what extent young people were either aware of, or affected by, this binary nature of the town. Through the photo-elicitation research it quickly became clear that young people in Castlemaine have a very keen perception of this dichotomy within the community as it emerged as a prevalent theme in the research in various ways. Throughout the interviews there were a repeated references to this difference, and for the most part, it emerged through young people referring to the “other” side of Castlemaine. It appears that the dichotomy is bound in notions of class and cultural expectations around consumption, development, and socio-political views.

Throughout the interviews, the young Castlemaine participants frequently and repeatedly refer to the dichotomous nature of Castlemaine. From Dominic’s assertion that “through Castlemaine, there’s two completely different vibes”, to Julia’s descriptions of the “whole other side” of Castlemaine, there is a pervasive awareness of a dualistic community. In some instances, this has little bearing on how the young person relates to their home town. For instance, Julia works as a babysitter for a number of families who have recently moved into Castlemaine from Melbourne. She has a strong friendship group with shared interests in participating in creating and viewing visual art and music for leisure and entertainment. While she has an awareness of what she refers to as the “other side” of Castlemaine, she doesn’t see it affect her personally.

*Julia: ... I mainly cross paths with people my age or the newer people; the newer-comers. Um, and I know there’s like a whole other side of Castlemaine, like really old locals who hate change, but I don’t know, like I kind of forget that they exist... I only see a tiny bit of Castlemaine and I feel like – that’s everyone, and of course I feel like that’s everyone, because it’s everyone that I see.*

On a practical level for Julia it is easy to live in Castlemaine completely surrounded by a community with a shared values and interest base. Julia’s comments here appear to affirm



Ragusa's (2011a) research on tree changers' aspirations for and perceptions of community in rural Australian towns. Her research identified that "one's local or non-local status mattered greatly in rural Australia", and locals normally considered tree-changers to be outsiders, regardless of how long they had been in the area (Ragusa, 2011a, p. 99). Julia moved to Castlemaine when she was two-years-old with her parents from inner-northern Melbourne and it appears that this social divide between the locals and re-locaters has persisted over the remaining sixteen years of her life. However, she also notes that she sees young people as being able to cross boundaries of the sociocultural divide. Julia sees the divide as being based on a combination of age and length of residence in the town, indicating that youth cultures may prove to be a bridging force. "People my age" could have lived in Castlemaine for any length of time, but the mere aspect of youth could indicate that they will be more likely to have aligned social and cultural interests. Leyshon (2008) and Farrugia (2016) both argue that youth cultures have often been represented or constructed as being aligned with urban forms, so perhaps this enables young people, regardless of place of birth or length of residence, to be able to bridge the local/newcomer divide. The "really old locals who hate change", on the other hand, are perhaps generational Castlemaine families who Julia may perceive as exhibiting more traditional rural social, cultural and political interests. In Julia's perception of the social divide in Castlemaine, there exists a dualistic notion of community in which opposing values and cultural expectations are starting to emerge.

Alex discusses the social split in Castlemaine. He describes a tension he has experienced historically personally, with the *other* side of Castlemaine, which he perceives as "bogan". However, he also comments that he has perceived a change in this difference over recent years:

**Alex:** *Yeah, I think there is definitely a bit of a social split in Castlemaine. But I think it's changing, I think it's getting closer than it once was. I mean, yeah like when I*

*grew up in Castlemaine, I would walk down the street and get called a “faggot” out of the car and stuff. And that was just a normal thing growing up in Castlemaine.*

The use of the term “faggot” as an insult illustrates a means of attempted social control behaviours and expressions around masculine gender. This kind of homophobic humour is argued to be a core aspect of the creation Australian masculine identity (McCann, Plummer, & Minichiello, 2010, p. 506). Homophobic insults are often used by young men to refer to other young men who don’t conform to the dominant modes of masculinity, by exhibiting behaviours or tendencies such as demonstrating emotion, being bad at sports, being artistic or academic, or looking different (Plummer, 2001). Therefore, the proper masculine (non-“faggot”) identity is socially constructed in opposition to these other supposedly non-masculine traits. Alex articulates that having long hair and playing music as a teenager contributed to him being on the receiving end of this type of behaviour. In discussing the importance of mobility he feels for young people in Castlemaine (further discussed in the following chapter), Alex suggests that people who don’t leave a small town are likely to be uneducated and have limited opportunity for growth and may display racist or sexist attitudes. These are traits which he does not associate with personally. So for Alex, the social split in his community is most obviously perceived through an attitudinal spectrum from political correctness (himself) to racist, homophobic and sexist attitudes (“bogans”). However, he perceives that the divided community may have grown closer over time – indicating that perhaps he sees or experiences less tension between the two sides of Castlemaine than he once did.

**Alex:** *... but you know I think what’s happened with the town more recently and with the change, I think even the “bogans” have become a bit more chill you know, it’s not like Castlemaine “bogans” are the most “bogany” people in the world you know... I think even the Bogans of Castlemaine are now kind of politically correct or something.*

Political correctness is not a trait normally associated with the figure of the “bogan” (Threadgold, 2018).

Dominic clearly delineates the different facets of Castlemaine as being-sports focused or arts-focused. He describes making an active change in friendship groups from “sporties” to “arties” in his final two years of high school. Here he describes how he perceives the dichotomy as “two completely different vibes” in Castlemaine.

**Dominic:** ... like there's the football, like Castlemaine footy club and 'the Cri' – the Criterion pub it's kind of like twenty-year-old footballers and tradies who go there. And then there's the younger generation, slash, the older generation of the arts and crafts. Like they're just two completely different vibes running across.

Like Julia, Dominic perceives that youthfulness can be a cohering force across this divide. While Dominic describes shifting friendship groups from the sporties to the arties, he personally finds it quite easy to shift socially between both groups.

**Dominic:** Like I'll go past the Cri' [pub] and they'll be saying shit to people like “oh you faggots” but I'll walk past going home from a party or something and I'll talk to them. Like I fit in with both groups.

While the sporties display behaviour that Alex refers to as “bogan”, especially use of the term “faggot” as a derogatory insult, for Dominic, “bogan” does not arise as part of his social vocabulary in this context. As a former sporty himself, Dominic is possibly more indoctrinated into the social world in which this homophobic name-calling is normalised.

Now that I have introduced an overt understanding that young people have of their being two main facets to the community in Castlemaine, I will further examine the ways which this division is reflected on discursively as a means of identifying difference. This discursive construction acts to simultaneously position the distinctions of self and “other”.

Threadgold's (2018) *Youth, Class and Everyday Struggles* and his Bourdieusian analysis of the constructs of the "hipster" and the "bogan" provides a useful grounding point for the examination of young people's discursive constructions of this dichotomy in Castlemaine. Threadgold (2018) asserts that "the mental constructs of the hipster and bogan evolve from attempts to map class anxieties around taste, morals and values from a privileged position in social space" (p. 75). This is useful not least because the terms used by young people in Castlemaine map fairly directly onto Threadgold's "hipster" / "bogan" dichotomy, but also because it helps to provide a frame for discussing notions of class as it emerged in Castlemaine, through a focus on values and morals more so than production and labour.

The figure below presents the words that were used to describe both contingents of the community in Castlemaine. In some cases these words were used to express the oppositional dichotomy, while in others, they were merely used to describe one aspect of the community. Here they provide an insight into young people's perceptions of the different cultural facets of Castlemaine. The dichotomy here can be seen as a spectrum, in which others are negatively identified at either extreme. Most of the cohort elicited positive identification with aspects of the discursive dichotomy presented on the left-hand side of the diagram shown in green.

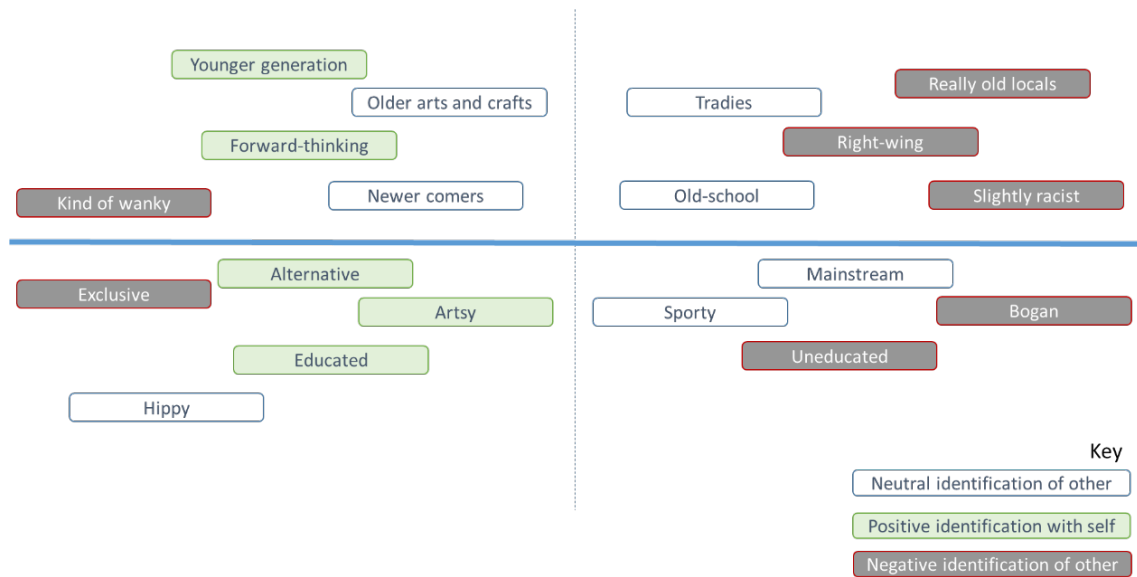


Figure 16 Discursive dichotomy in Castlemaine

Source: Author

This dichotomy elicited from the young participants in Castlemaine maps easily onto Threadgold’s analysis of the construction of the “bogan” and the hipster in media discourse. Here I cite an excerpt of Threadgold’s summation of the “bogan” and the “hipster” figures, adding emphasis where there is a direct correlation to the terms used by young participants in Castlemaine as presented in the table above. The “bogan”, writes Threadgold (2018), is:

...uneducated, usually in blue collar *manual work* [‘tradies’] or unemployed... lazy... Bogans are *racist, sexist, misogynist, and violent*... mostly white ... They are *mindless consumers* [‘mainstream’], not cultural producers (p. 91)

While the term “hipster” was not used by any of the young participants in Castlemaine to identify self or others, we can see from the excerpt below, which many of the terms used by young people identified in the left-hand column of the table above. The “hipster”, according to Threadgold (2018), is:

...attending or has dropped out of *university education*, usually in *arts, communication, business or marketing*. They either work in the white collar ‘creative culture industry’ or are setting up *small artisanal businesses*... often portrayed as

*'PC'* and *'green'* ['forward thinking']... The hipster is in constant search for 'authentic' tastes, especially the *nostalgic, bespoke and exotic* ['hippy', 'arty'] as a means of *pretentious* ['kind of wanky'] and insecure form of distinction... (pp. 91-92)

As described in Chapter 5 of this thesis on research participants, the nature of the study and the way in which the recruitment processes evolved in Castlemaine is likely to have played a significant role in affecting the nature of the group of participants. The young participants in Castlemaine generally exhibited a much stronger interest in creative pursuits over sport-based pursuits and mostly either actively defined themselves as sitting within the group described by the words in the left-hand column in the figure above, or described lifestyle preferences and activities that would also socially align them with that element of Castlemaine. Many of the Castlemaine participants also discuss overtly self-aware behaviour (for instance Dominic's ironic use of uncool spaces and behaviours discussed in Chapter 6), and generally exhibit a high level of self-reflexivity as demonstrated in the discussion on consumption preferences in the first half of this chapter. Hollingworth and Williams (2009) examine young people's discursive constructions of working class British youth as "chavs" (akin in many ways to the Australian term "bogan"). "Chavs" (Hollingworth & Williams, 2009, p. 471) and "bogans" (Threadgold, 2018, p. 76) are not generally self-identifying, but they are labelled as such in a process of "othering" by middle class young people. The term hipster on the other hand, "tends to allow for reflexivity, irony, self-knowing and ambivalence" (Threadgold, 2018, p. 76). Again, while the young participants in Castlemaine did not self-identify as "hipsters", or indeed use the term at all, there is a sociocultural alignment exhibited through their self-reflexivity, values and behaviours, as I have identified. So, as much as the young participants in this chapter are observing and reporting on difference in their community, within their construction of this discursive dichotomy they are perhaps also working to perpetuate it by "othering" those that do not meet their cultural framework.

The discursive dichotomy here then works to articulate a division of social class in Castlemaine through a lens of cultural preferences – as indicated by “arty” and “sporty”, or “alternative” and “mainstream”. This division is very likely to have been deepened by the gentrification of the town, described in a travel article on *The Urban List* as boasting “a burgeoning food scene and a sense of undercover cool” (Willcocks, 2016). In referring to the challenges for the community, the MASC Cultural Development Officer states “I think some of the challenges are not letting that ‘us and them’ divide explode”, signalling that there exists a substantial amount of tension between the two facets of the community. There are clearly instances in which this dichotomy elicits tension – for instance the numerous fierce debates on the Facebook page *Castlemania*, revolving around topics of politics, environment, development and commercial enterprise. This chapter now builds a deeper understanding of young people’s perceptions and experience of a divided community, especially examining where tensions arise and how this affects the lived experience of young people.

### 10.3 The impacts of classed cultural division on young people’s sense of place

Lizzie articulates the divide in Castlemaine as between people who are alternative and those who are mainstream. Here she replies to my question about what she perceives to be negative factors associated with living in a small town.

**Lizzie:** *Castlemaine has the big divide of kind of the alternative and the mainstream, and they’re both quite awful to each other so you’ve got to be really careful especially when you’re putting yourself out there in a public way. Because you will just get a lot of negative attention. No matter which side you’re on. And now that we have Facebook – that’s very public and quite awful because people seem to get behind the computer and have no filter any more.*

Lizzie perceives a very strong and public divide between the two main facets of the town. She pins a lot of the negative behaviour from either group on the tool of Facebook. The Facebook group page *Castlemania* was discussed in the Chapter 4, and has become a site for sometimes vicious arguing, with certain conversations having been shut down and banned from the site by moderators. For Lizzie, these very vocal and public displays of tensions between the “alternative” and “mainstream” facets of the community work to reduce her felt sense of agency as it limits her desire to engage publicly.

While the public arguing and intolerance displayed between different groups in Castlemaine is experienced quite negatively for Lizzie, Bodhi senses a different value within this.

**Bodhi:** *I do like living in Castlemaine, I like the small, you know, it feels quite close if anything happens it seems to be on everyone's mind. There's a Facebook page called Castlemania which seems to have a lot of, you know, talks, fights on there about things in Castlemaine but they are always interesting you know. It just shows that people do care about the town because they're always you know so interested in, I don't know, fighting over stuff that's going on in town and stuff like that.*

So while Lizzie finds this public fighting a very negative aspect about her home town, for Bodhi it provides proof that individuals actively care about their town and their community. And while there exists a division in the community, social media, in Bodhi's eyes, becomes a tool for people to demonstrate passion and care about what happens in his home town.

### 10.3.1 The Domino's effect

One of the most recent and topical points-of-reference for illustrating this sense of a dichotomous community played out over the arrival of a Domino's pizza franchise in Castlemaine. The planning process evoked extensive arguments especially on social media prior to the opening of the chain takeaway restaurant. Three of the photo-elicitation participant's photographs contain pictures of Domino's, taken as a reference point for



discussing the tension over it [photographs 3h13, 3l21, 3m10]. These participants, as well as some of the others who did not photograph the restaurant, talk at length about the oppositional nature of community sentiment about the arrival of the restaurant, as well as their own feelings about the opening of the franchise. In a sense, the reaction to the planning and arrival of Domino's in Castlemaine works as a sort of archetypal site of class struggle, further demonstrating the ways in which values of social class are embedded within consumption practices in Castlemaine.

For Rebecca, the discussion around the reasons for taking the photograph [3m10] focusses on the debate that the arrival of the franchise caused in the community rather than the franchise itself.

**Rebecca:** *Number 10 I took a picture of the Domino's flags against the trees. Because everyone is either sooo in favour or sooo grumpy about it. And on Castlemania the Facebook page, everyone was getting so angry about it [laughs]. They actually had to make a new Facebook page to make sure people didn't clog up Castlemania with all this Domino's crap [continues laughing]. Because people just kept going on about it. But yeah, I took a picture of it because it was so controversial. But I don't really care about it.*

For Rebecca, the nature of the debate and controversy around the new franchise was laughable, and difficult to understand how some people in the community could be so oppositional, invested and angry toward each other. While she mentions that she feels ambivalent about the restaurant personally, earlier in the interview, she also mentions having applied for a job there [photograph 3m10]. Again, as with Bodhi's discussion of his preference for small business in the first half of this chapter – there is a tension for young people in balancing investments in subjective values in place and the structural reality of gaining a job in a small town.

In discussing her photograph [3h13], Naomi also laughs at the debate that occurred about the opening of the franchise. However, she then clearly articulates that for her, the commercial, non-local nature of the business is not something she would choose to have as a part of her community. Here she is talking about her photograph [3h13]:



*Photograph 58 Castlemaine, Naomi, 3h13*

**Naomi:** *Dominos [laughs] so there's been a lot of debate about that. But personally I really don't like that Domino's has come to Castlemaine because it's sort of such a diverse and interesting community and then to have these franchises popping up just sort of takes away a bit from the sort of integrity of the place I guess. And so it becomes more like every other town, and just the sort of commercialisation is not really something that you want to have as part of your community really. Although I mean a lot of people have decided to just embrace it I think, but for me, I'm not really interested in it. Yeah, and also there's already a lot of pizza shops in town, so I'd prefer to support a more of a local business really.*

Naomi views the integrity of Castlemaine being embedded in the diversity and authenticity of local businesses. The fast-food restaurant appears to detract from Naomi's emplaced values in which she can invest subjectively – as discussed in the first half of this chapter.

Bodhi echoes these sentiments in describing his opinions on the opening of Domino's.

**Bodhi:** *I'm definitely of the second point of view; that they're taking away from the uniqueness. Though it does offer jobs, I can completely see that... And I don't necessarily like some of the big franchises that come to our town – and take away from our local businesses and stuff like that. That's just not something I'm really that into I guess. I'd prefer to have local businesses run by local families, hiring local students and stuff like that.*

Lizzie also notes that she would prefer not to have a Domino's, as she also sees value in supporting local businesses in her town. However, like Rebecca, she took the photograph more as a means to reflect on the debate and divisiveness surrounding the opening of the restaurant, rather than it being a playing a big part in her life personally. Here she talks about her photograph [3|21].

**Lizzie:** *That's the opening of Domino's that I spotted as I was getting into my car. I was like, 'look I'm not going to get any closer in case anyone thinks I'm getting a pizza'! But you obviously already know about the huge uproar on the internet about Domino's. I just think that is pretty normal of Castlemaine whenever anything like this happens.*

Lizzie's reluctance to move closer to the fast food chain in case she is seen demonstrates the felt experience of the judgmental nature of the town she discussed earlier.



*Photograph 59 Castlemaine, Lizzie, 3i21*

This section has discussed the young participant's awareness and feelings around the dichotomous, classed nature of Castlemaine. The tensions between the different facets of the community are evidently based around moral judgments of taste

The tensions that have arisen in Castlemaine over the arrival of a Domino's restaurant can be understood as a site of class struggle. It is important to note here that there is ambiguity and tension within individuals as well as between the dichotomous facets of the community. For instance, Bodhi claims that morally he would prefer not to have a Domino's in Castlemaine, but he also sees that a franchise such as Domino's or other big business would offer jobs for young people. Likewise, Rebecca mentions that ethically she would prefer not to have major international franchises such as Domino's opening in Castlemaine, but she has also applied for a job there. The morally-driven, alternative cultural capital appears to conflict with the structural realities of small town life for young people.

## 10.4 Conclusion

The consumption choices reflected in the photo-elicitation data, made by young people in Castlemaine reflect a moral judgement that may be bound in social class. These kinds of “diverse and idiosyncratic” socially and environmentally driven consumption choices reflect a “cultural sophistication that only comes with the education and knowledge” that helps to create and maintain one’s social position (Currid-Halkett, 2017, p. 53). However, I would also argue that in the small town of Castlemaine, there is a mainstreaming of this form of alternative consumption. The dualistic nature of the town is reflected by what is on offer there, meaning that young people can choose to eat at Domino’s or Subway and shop at Target, or eat at a variety of locally owned family businesses and shop at op-shops, vintage shops or shops selling locally crafted goods. In this context, it is possible that young people could develop self-reflexive, value-driven consumption habits, without requiring a high level of education and knowledge that Currid-Halkett (2017) claims is necessary.

The cohort in Castlemaine was by no means entirely economically middle class. Several participants were from single parent households with parents who worked in low-value service industries such as childcare and cleaning. I do not have comprehensive data on this for the whole cohort, as this information arose casually in the interviews rather than being strategically sought through the line of questioning. However, for the most part, the Castlemaine participants expressed a similar value-base around consumption and leisure choices and practices and an appreciation of the outward expression of these values in the space of their home town. This is reflected in the appreciation of the town as “arty” or creative, the valuing of local produce and family business over larger commercial enterprise, the privileging of sharing or buying second-hand goods, and the appreciation of locally-made art and crafts.

The photo-elicitation research here also revealed a tension apparent between this romantic ideal of a place that reflects one's subjective social and environmental stance and the structural reality of rural young people's lives. The discussion around the Domino's debate has been able to shed some light on this complex dynamic. For while Bodhi and Rebecca are careful to suggest that they would rather support local business than a major franchise, the Domino's is also seen as a good option for employment for young people.

## Chapter 11. Should I stay or should I go?

### 11.1 Introduction

This thesis has so far examined the various ways in which the cultural features of place affect young people's sense of attachment to place. This final chapter of the thesis directly addresses the secondary research question:

*How does place attachment affect the ways that young people from small country towns envision their future locational choices?*

The definition of place attachment, in the words of Altman and Low (1992), is simply the "bonding between people and places" (p. 2). Bonding implies not only an emotional or affective bond, but also a physical sticking together. The concept of place attachment thus carries with it an insinuation that people who experience a strong sense of attachment to a place will endeavour to stay within that place. As Lewicka (2014) writes attachment "implies 'anchoring' of emotions in the object of attachment, feeling of belonging, *willingness to stay close, and wish to return when away*" (p. 49, emphasis added). The very concept of place attachment then, has often been identified and measured by environmental psychologists through quantitative scales that "diagnose" attachment "by declared intention to continue being in the place" (Lewicka, 2014, p.49).

My research, on the other hand, has drawn out and interpreted the qualitative nature of the place relationship for young people in two small Victorian country towns. Using "proximity-maintaining behaviour" (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 4) as an indicator and measure of place attachment is, for regional and rural young people, complicated to say the least. As young people from small towns consider their futures, their locational choices are of course affected by structural factors such as education and employment pathways, but also by symbolic and values-based factors, such as desiring relocation to seek new experiences that aid in identity formation (see for instance Farrugia, 2016).

Changing roles in the household, completing education, gaining employment, moving from the parental or guardian home to independent housing, partnered cohabitation and having a child are all part of normative youth transitions (Skelton, 2002, para. 5). While these phases were historically normative and linear, changes in the global labour market, the rising cost of housing in capital cities, and changing cultural norms around marriage and parenthood have meant that the transitional phase has become protracted and blurred (Threadgold, 2018, p. 14). Skelton (2002) contends that focusing on youth transitions places emphasis on adulthood as the norm and by focusing on the young person “becoming” adult, denies the importance and relevance of their present being, which in turn further marginalises young people.

In questioning the current usefulness of transitions as an area of youth studies, Threadgold (2018) suggests that the concept of “struggle” can be deployed usefully in the examination of young people as it allows a simultaneous focus on youth cultures and transitions (pp. 14-15). Struggle, for Threadgold (2018), does not denote only a negative experience, but rather:

*Struggles can be creative, empowering, stimulating inspiring and arousing. Struggles can be devastating, depressing, anxious, uncertain, filled with resignation or indignation. Struggles can be routine and boring, and they can be spontaneous and novel. Struggle in this sense represents the day-to-day challenges and choices we all face and deal with along the trajectory of our lives. (p. 24, emphasis in original)*

Struggle takes into account cultural, relational, symbolic and representational aspects of class and can be perceived within diverse modalities. For instance, in educational and employment choices, or in competing uses for public space, as in “any given social space there are competing logics” (Threadgold, 2018, p. 24). Gabriel’s (2006) adoption of a performative understanding to frame the youth-adult transition reflects this notion of struggle as she adopts a lens of emerging socio-cultural, political and lifestyle differences



between a young person and their home town. The notion of struggle is relevant to my study here as the relationships that young people have with their small home towns are fraught with ambiguity and ambivalence as sites of struggle.

Even as the conceptual distinction between rural and urban is said to be blurred (for instance, Cloke, Goodwin, & Milburne, 1988; Nairn *et al.*, 2003; Murdoch & Day, 1998), there are undeniable factors particular to a small town that impact people's experience of their home place, positively and negatively. A smaller population means a narrower employer base; a longer physical distance to education and training institutions and lack of public transport. These aspects of a small town are highly likely to impact on a young person's sense of place relationship, as they negotiate constructing their future identities. A small town can offer comfort and security and a strong sense of community as I have demonstrated in Chapter 7. However, these same supportive factors can simultaneously be experienced as stifling for a lack of privacy and anonymity as demonstrated in Chapter 8. Furthermore, as illustrated in Chapter 7, where a small town lacks structured entertainment and nightlife for young people it can also be experienced as socially limited and/or spatially boring. The "rural panopticon" (Philo *et al.*, 2017) appears to diminish spatial agency and place affection for young people in Maryborough, so some young people experience the town space as boring and uninviting.

Whereas young people indicate a high sense of agency to avert their own boredom in secluded rural, bushland or smaller village spaces surrounding the Maryborough, the town itself is construed as lacking in sanctioned activities and spaces to attract young people and therefore socially constructed as boring and uninviting. On the other hand, experiences of boredom in Castlemaine are more closely connected with the sense of Castlemaine being cosmopolitan but not-quite-urban – thus, some young people experience the town as lacking, when juxtaposed with the city (Farrugia, Smyth, & Harrison, 2014a). The lack of educational and employment opportunities has been the subject of a great deal of research

on rural and regional young people as researchers attempt to understand how young people navigate and are affected by these structural factors (for instance, Baum, O'Connor, *et al.*, 2005b; Bourke & Waite, 2011; Jamieson, 2000; Theodori & Theodori, 2015). So, even when place attachment is felt strongly, young people may feel they have to move away to access these structural opportunities (Theodori & Theodori, 2015), or else they may want to move away to access broader social and cultural experiences.

Herein lies the struggle – even with strong place attachment, many young people still leave their small towns. They often both want to stay and be connected to their place, and simultaneously need to or want to leave, to access structural and cultural assets that are not available in their home towns. The final chapter of this thesis now explores the feelings that young people have towards their home towns alongside their envisioned future locational choices. First, I discuss the findings from Castlemaine and then Maryborough. Finally, I discuss the results comparatively as they relate to different theories of mobility and place attachment.

## 11.2 Place relationship and envisioned futures

### 11.2.1 Castlemaine

The interviews with young participants in Castlemaine mostly elicited a distinct appreciation of their home town, often expressed in passionate terms. Participant responses to feelings about the town are generally very positive, indicating an outgoing, subjective investment in place.

**Rebecca:** *Oh I love it. I really do. It's such an artsy town and it's good. It's just got good people. And they have like the old values as well so it's nice. Like when I was walking here, I passed an old couple and they were like "morning" and that made me happy. It's just nice.*

**Julia:** *I feel so lucky that I grew up here. Yeah cause it's so safe, and I love my school – that I've left now – and just all of my friends have got my year level around me and heaps of neighbours and like my brother and his friends, and it's so close to Melbourne as well. Yeah, like it's a really quick train ride.*

**Bodhi:** *I've lived in Castlemaine my whole life, and I've kind of really come to be really proud of the town and that's kind of – yeah, I like the town. Most people are just like, oh when I'm older I want to move to Melbourne 'cause there's so much more that you can do. But, I don't know, I like the small town kind of feel. I'm proud of it.*

The three very positive responses above and the use of affective words like “love”, “lucky”, and “proud” indicate a strong and deep place affection. Even when conveying a level of ambivalence, describing Castlemaine as an “in-between place”, Dominic's ambivalence relates to his rural home place (several kilometres out of Castlemaine), rather than the town itself:

**Dominic:** *I [pause] oh for the moment it kind of feels like an in-between place for me. But like socially if I was living in Castlemaine, and not just that little bit out, then it would be pretty good though. 'Cause I feel like there's – in our friendship group, there's about thirty plus people, and within that there's the ten who all live in walking distance. And the others of us who live out at [outlying villages around Castlemaine], like we all find it a bit difficult to get involved with each other, because of the ways to get in. But having like the commitment of always pushing myself to come into town, to ride in it has made it a lot easier to – I don't know – it feels a lot better than just being at home. Like whenever I'm at home I'm like “oh come on”!*

Here again we see a strong sense of connection to place, constructed through social connection with peers. In a similar way to how Farrugia *et al.* (2014a) describe an

“extraverted” sense of place, in which rural young people “constantly position their locale in relation to the opportunities provided by urban centres” (pp. 1164-1165), Dominic’s home locale is positioned in relation to the social opportunities provided within the higher-density space of town. Home, being on rural acreage outside of town then is contrasted as isolating and boring. While town, on the other hand, provides an ease of social opportunities, so is worth a thirty-minute bicycle ride.

Jacob’s response to how he felt about living in Castlemaine, was positive, but indicates far less subjective investment in place than the responses given above:

**Jacob:** *Yeah, I like it. It’s better because it’s not as loud as the highway or anything in Bendigo. And there’s less idiots and drug addicts. Well there’s a couple here but they don’t really annoy ya, as much as criminals in Bendigo. I get threatened a lot more in Bendigo than here.*

As with Dominic, Jacob too, demonstrates an extraverted sense of place. He constructs Castlemaine positively as quiet, safe and comfortable in opposition to the provincial city of Bendigo which is constructed as loud, unruly and unsafe. For Jacob then, while he says he likes Castlemaine, he does not illustrate as much of a subjective identity investment in the town as the respondents quoted above. Only two of the twelve participants, Duncan and Naomi, had a more negative response when asked about how they felt about living in Castlemaine. Duncan is the one participant who, through the photo-elicitation process continually spoke of a negative sentiment towards Castlemaine. However, even when I ask him how he feels about the town, he responds negatively, but still with a level of ambiguity.

**Duncan:** *It’s alright [shrugs], ergh, it’s alright. It’s not the best place but it’s not the worst. There certainly could be better places to be living.*

**Ember:** *Do you have an idea of where you might move to if you didn’t stay here – where you would like to live?*

**Duncan:** *Ummm, I don't know everywhere sort of sucks. Yeah.*

So while Duncan feels negatively about his home town, he admits that he currently doesn't feel a positive association with any place in particular. Naomi, on the other hand, suggests that she is not fond of Castlemaine because of its size and lack of entertainment options. However, through the photo-elicitation process, her photographs and discussions continually revolve around sites, activities, events that she is strongly connected to and discusses enthusiastically. Many of these are sites that Naomi appears to positively invest in subjectively, such as her appreciation of local artists markets, or her photograph of public, communal vegie growing boxes discussed in the previous chapter – which she values morally. While her initial response to how she feels about living in Castlemaine is ambivalent, stating: “Yeah [pause], there is that thing that you do want to leave”, the photo-elicitation research has continually drawn out descriptions of a very positive relationship with her hometown.

Participants were asked about their intention to stay in or leave Castlemaine, and if they intended to leave, whether they would consider returning. Lizzie was the only one of the twelve participants who indicates that she definitely envisions staying in Castlemaine for the foreseeable future – though she had left at nineteen and since returned. Three others indicated that they would prefer to stay in Castlemaine but that they intend to move for other reasons: Alex suggests that his preference would be to stay in Castlemaine, but he is planning to relocate to Melbourne to be where his girlfriend lives. Bodhi and Rebecca indicate that their preference would be to stay in Castlemaine but structural reasons – access to employment and education – will necessitate them to relocate. The eight other participants all express a desire or intention to leave town, with one (Jacob) planning to head to Bendigo, two (Isabelle, Naomi) to Melbourne, four (Dominic, Julia, Eli, Grace) interstate or overseas and just one, Duncan, opting for a quieter location (“maybe I'll move to a mountain and live in a cave and just play music”).

When quizzed on the reasoning for their desire or intention to leave, the participants predominantly offer non-structural reasons associated with lifestyle limitations arising from the smallness of the town, the limiting nature of being in one place, and the understanding that mobility is a normalised part of a life trajectory and part of the development of self. It is interesting to note that, as discussed in Chapter 7 (looking at young people's experiences and perceptions of boredom), Julia is cited as adamantly saying she does not see Castlemaine as boring. However, to her the notion of not leaving the town is boring itself:

**Julia:** *I don't really like the thought of that [staying or returning to live in Castlemaine] [laughs] just 'cause it seems a bit boring – not going anywhere else.*

It seems Julia feels that staying in a small town would limit her personal development, and perhaps make her a boring person. In this sense, she indicates a strong sense of the mobility imperative – that mobility and experience of other places is a normal part of a non-boring life course. Other participants also relate their envisioned locational choices to personal growth and subjective development through the experience of other places:

**Naomi:** *Um, I guess it can get a bit, um, boring, and it feels like there's nothing to do and you just want to get out of here.*

**Grace:** *I want to finish studying in Melbourne then go overseas and live overseas somewhere but I don't think I'll ever like, come back to Castlemaine to live here ever again, unless I need to. Just, 'cause like I've spent the last eighteen years of my life here and eighteen years is enough time to spend in one place.*

**Dominic:** *... it's not offering that room to grow and expand and opportunities, like you have to travel to Melbourne to get those.*

**Alex:** *I feel like living in a small country town can stop people growing and maturing. And I feel like that's the problem like I feel like there's some people I went to high*

*school with – [who haven't left] they're still beautiful great people but they're still maybe racist or they're still sexist.*

In these responses – all from young people who demonstrate a subjective investment in their home towns – the notions of staying in one place is perceived as limiting for subjective growth and development. Alex perceives people that have not left their home town as having limited development of socio-political attitudes. This may be especially because Castlemaine (along with many small towns in Victoria) is predominantly white, so people do not have the opportunity for encountering as broad a range of cultures and subcultures. Similarly, Duncan suggests explicitly that staying in Castlemaine is associated with limits to subjective growth. Hence, a picture is starting to emerge – that an affectionate and positive place attachment for these young people in Castlemaine, is not associated with a diagnosis of place attachment by “declared intention to continue being in place” (Lewicka, 2011, p. 49).

Even while Lizzie currently has no desire or intention to leave Castlemaine, she has lived overseas during her late teens and at that stage did not plan on returning. Lizzie is several years older than most of the other participants and she returned to live in Castlemaine after becoming pregnant while living in London. Here she talks about why in her late teens she chose to live in London rather than elsewhere in Victoria.

***Lizzie:** Like, I went straight to London and then came back. So that was completely removing myself from it [Castlemaine]. I didn't dislike it or anything, but I'm sure living in Melbourne would have been very different as well, because all of my friends live in Melbourne, and I could've come home for the weekend and stuff whereas going there, it was more an experiential thing, because I needed to go and live in a city – I just needed to go away and I didn't want to live in Melbourne because I knew I'd just come home.*

So for Lizzie, even the capital city of Melbourne was seen to have too much familiarity and comfort to cater for her subjective development in her late teenage years. While the majority of interviewees indicated that they intend to leave Castlemaine, for some there was also a sense of the possibility of return. Most of this potential of returning revolved around being connected to family and the possibility of participants having their own family. Eighteen-year-old Isabelle is very direct and sure about her intention for when she plans to have her own children she will return to Castlemaine to have access to family support. Her description here resonates with research that examines perceptions of rural areas as a safe, good place to raise children (Valentine, 1997) but a limiting place to be a young adult (Leyshon, 2008).

**Isabelle:** *But when I am old enough to consider having kids of my own, I'll probably move back up here, I'll have the support of my family, and you know it's a community where I know most of the people. So I feel like I could feel safe having young children that can run off down the street and rollerblade down the hill with all of the plums, and you know, it's a safe community to have kids in.*

While her principal reason for envisioning a return to Castlemaine to have children is for family support, Isabelle also goes further by suggesting she will want to be the community she has grown up in herself and knows so well. For her the small, familiar town of Castlemaine equates to safety, which she feels has a high value in informing where she envisions choosing to live when raising a family.

Bodhi and Rebecca are the only two participants who desire to stay in Castlemaine, but will likely move away to access education. For Rebecca, the prospect of returning is completely bound in the location of her mother:

**Rebecca:** *I think [I would return], because my mum lives here and I think she'll live here for the rest of your days.*



Rebecca goes further to say that, while she can't entirely know what will happen in her future, "it's a nice town and I wouldn't mind moving back here." So the desire to return to live in Castlemaine because of wanting to be close to her mother is also influenced by her positive relationship with the town. As I am discussing young people's desires and intentions around their envisioned future locations, it is important to note that these imaginings are fluid and context dependent. This is demonstrated by Lizzie, who returned to Castlemaine from living in London describes her predicament in becoming pregnant at twenty-one while living in London:

**Lizzie:** *I only came back because I was having a baby. I would have stayed otherwise. I wasn't ready to come home, but I needed my mum, I was scared. I was only young and I was having a baby and I needed my mum. I wanted to come home and do it here, and I'm really glad I did it now, but at the time I wanted to stay overseas forever.*

Lizzie makes it clear that at the time, her first choice would not have been to return to Castlemaine. Rather, the prospect of having her own family prompted and necessitated her return. Her feelings now about returning to Castlemaine present a radical shift in how she felt about the prospect of settling in Castlemaine in her late teens and early twenties. A major factor for Lizzie in this is geographic closeness to her parents and her partner's parents. Throughout the interview she referred repeatedly to the value she finds in her children having two sets of grandparents living in the same town. Perhaps similarly to how Lizzie describes feeling in her teens, Grace suggests that plans to leave Castlemaine, with no vision of returning, but for a small and vague caveat:

**Grace:** *...but I don't think I'll ever like, come back to Castlemaine to live here ever again, unless I need to.*

“Unless I need to” could potentially indicate some kind of familial need, whether it was for Grace to have her own children and be close to her parents, or to care for her parents. Or a return could also be necessitated by structural issues such as housing or employment, and the stability of the parental home. This was the case for Alex, who returned to Castlemaine to stay at his mother’s home while completing his final year of university study. Here he explains why he chose to return to Castlemaine after I ask him if the possibility of not paying rent while completing his studies was a factor in his choice.

*Alex: Yeah, it was just, I just burnt out because I was doing forty hours a week study for contact hours and then working three or four days a week as well and then playing music as well down in Melbourne, it was ridiculous, I just burnt out.*

In Alex’s case the necessity to return to Castlemaine came not from the prospect of having children or needing to support a family member, but from needing a reprieve from the burden of contemporary city life. As demonstrated in the case of Lizzie’s return, and Grace’s caveat of “unless I need to”, these young people’s place-related visioning of the future at a given point in time will not necessarily correlate with their future choice of home-place.

Interestingly, the responses about reasons for young people’s intentions to leave Castlemaine are predominantly unrelated to structural factors such as education and employment. The responses are akin, in a way, to Farrugia’s (2016) conceptualisation of symbolic aspects of rural young people’s mobility imperative – that the city is constructed as a place for youth cultures and nightlife, which are an important part of developing subjectivities.

If young people wish to take up the subjectivities offered by contemporary youth culture, they must become mobile, either imaginatively or through actual migration. Both imaginative mobilities and actual migrations are embedded within, and

articulate a complex relationship to, these metrocentric cultural distinctions.

(Farrugia, 2016, p. 843)

The responses start to build a picture of a growth mindset for young people who have grown up in Castlemaine, in which the small town is seen as experientially limiting and non-enabling of personal development. For these young people, “attachment” is not necessarily bound in a physical attachment, and indeed is important than mobility at this stage in their life and identity development. Even where there is an overtly positive relationship with the home town the importance of experiencing other places as a part of personal growth wins out.

### 11.2.2 Maryborough

in Maryborough, the investigation of young people living in Maryborough has revealed some complex dynamics between culture and place relationships for young people living in a disadvantaged regional town. On the whole, Maryborough is seen as boring and lacking for young people, particularly in relation to the sense of “things to do”. Paradoxically, Maryborough’s limited appeal for hanging out was not always because of the town’s small size. Tessa for instance, indicates that “more to see” in the bush. For Sara, there is more to do in neighbouring small towns that are much smaller than Maryborough, because they are more easily traversed on foot. As these two examples show, it is not just urban attractions that appeal to young people.

Bobby, Lola and Tessa were the three participants who express a love for their town, all answering the question to “do you like living in Maryborough” assuredly and affirmatively.

**Bobby:** *Yeah, I love it.*

**Lola:** *Yeah. I love it here.*

**Tessa:** *I do because it's a nice quiet town and I guess you know a lot of the people so you feel comfortable around it.*

However, whereas ten of the twelve participants in Castlemaine speak animatedly and fondly of their home town, in Maryborough, the majority of responses to how they feel about their home town are generally shorter and more ambiguous, ambivalent or negative. Here are the remainder of responses to the question "do you like living in Maryborough?"

**Greg:** *Yep.*

**Megan:** *Yeah it's OK [apprehensive] it's a bit small.*

**Frances:** *Um... yeah [questioning tone] it's really small, I dislike some people in Maryborough, but you get that everywhere you go.*

**Karl:** *Oh on the odd occasion.*

**Mark:** *Nah, not really.*

**Nina:** *Yeah [quietly with shrug]. [Ember: Yeah? Was that a little bit apprehensive?]  
Mmmm, sometimes it can be a little bit annoying. Um but other than that, pretty good.*

**Jacki:** *Oh, gee, I don't know. Um, I reckon Maryborough is a good place to come, like, there's a lot of things to do. It's hard for small towns because there's not much around but I mean I like coming to Maryborough to do shopping and things like that. Um, I reckon they could change a fair few things though. They need more things for young teenagers and stuff to do.*

**Sara:** *Yeah, I would, like I do like Maryborough, but just [pause] I don't know, there's not very much here for eighteen year olds. Kind of like there's not much of a nightlife or anything, and a lot of my friends have kind of moved away, like, 'cause I have a lot*

*of older friends as well, like they've moved away to go to Uni or whatever, and I'm kind of like, just stuck here, but I will come back, I know that.*

Given that several of the Maryborough participants' feelings about living in the town are somewhat ambivalent, and significant themes emerged in the research around boredom and lack of privacy, contributing to negative or stunted place relations I expected to also find that most of the participants would like to leave town. Mark and Karl, who convey almost wholly negative sentiments about Maryborough both envision moving away from Maryborough. However, while they have a negative relationship with the town – ascribing it as boring, with little to offer – they do not appear to be attracted to urban environments. For Karl, it does not appear to matter where he moves in particular, as long as it is out of his home town:

**Karl:** *Nah, I'm hoping to move away soon. One day. Like somewhere either further out into the country, further away from everyone or preferably closer to work and shit like that.*

Through Karl's comment we can see a simultaneous dual, envisioning – the fantasy of the rural area, which he is attracted to – away from people, conflicting with the need to find work. Once he completes VCAL, he hopes to complete an apprenticeship in a trade “anywhere between building, plumbing, anything like that”. Mark too hopes to complete an apprenticeship in mechanics. He envisages moving out of Maryborough to a small regional mining town in Western Australia:

**Ember:** *Do you imagine that you'll live here for a long time?*

**Mark:** *Not really,*

**Ember:** *So you see yourself going somewhere else?*

**Mark:** *Yeah*

**Ember:** *Where?*

**Mark:** *Um, I really want to go up to Western Australia. It's a nice place up there. A lot more to do than down here.*

**Ember:** *Whereabouts in Western Australia?*

**Mark:** *Um, where my sister is it's um, [regional mining town]. So it's like an hours' flight away from Perth.*

**Ember:** *So it's still a small town but a bit bigger than here?*

**Mark:** *A bit bigger than here. More opportunities for jobs, because it's all up in the mines and everything.*

Mark envisages moving interstate for family and perceived employment opportunities, suggesting that the regional mining town is bigger than Maryborough – though this is largely associated with his perception of employment opportunities. The town he proposes to move to, built for the iron ore mining industry, has significantly lower rates of unemployment (5.1% of labour force unemployed compared with Maryborough 7.8%, ABS Census 2016 Quickstats – SA2) and underemployment rates than in Maryborough (72.6% of working population in full-time employment compared with 48.3% in Maryborough, ABS Census 2016 Quickstats – SA2). Just over 40 % of the labour force in the regional mining town is employed in iron ore mining (ABS Census 2016 Quickstats – SA2) median rent and mortgages are significantly lower than national averages and median personal income is double the average for WA. It is not so much any cultural features of place that Mark is attracted to in envisioning moving to a small regional town in Western Australia, but rather the prospects of employment for high pay, while the familiarity and support of a family member there would provide an immediate level of social capital, connection and security.

Other participants who either had a more positive or more ambivalent place relationship in Maryborough, envision that they would either stay in Maryborough (Megan, Jacki, Nina, Bobby, and Lola), or that they would leave to pursue education opportunities (Frances, Greg, Tessa) or personal growth (Sara) before returning. Much of the reasoning for young people wanting to either stay in Maryborough or envisioning that they would return after a time away is based around the location of family in their home towns. In this sense, they are possibly experiencing not so much a place attachment, but an attachment to the family or family home, akin perhaps to a more functional relationship to place conceptualised by the notion of *dwelling* rather than reflexive attachment (Savage, 2010). Remember for instance, that Megan conveys a particular disengagement and disaffection with her hometown:

**Ember:** *And – do you go into the township of Maryborough much?*

**Megan:** *Not really.*

**Ember:** *Do you feel like there's much there for you?*

**Megan:** *No.*

However, regardless of this, Megan expresses no desire to live anywhere else. She likes the quiet and privacy of the bush and being able to carry out rural pursuits like trail motor biking. The township of Maryborough does not provide her any strong sense of affective or cultural engagement. Megan's family is in Maryborough and therefore she does not envisage leaving:

**Ember:** *Do you think that you'll live here for a long time, or do you imagine yourself living here in the future?*

**Megan:** *Yeah. Because my family's here.*

**Ember:** *Is it hard to imagine being away from them?*

**Megan:** *Yep.*

Savage (2010) asserts that the notion of *dwelling* is useful for describing a more functional attachment, rather than a more middle class, aesthetic and symbolic attachment to place (which he and others describe as “elective belonging” – see Savage *et al.*, 2005). “We see that the ‘dwellers’ present themselves in passive terms, not choosing their location but *literally placed by it*” (Savage, 2010, p. 131, emphasis added). Several of the participants provided reasons for envisioning a return to live in Maryborough based around home and family. The photographic data set contains 36 images of home-space – including home-street – in Maryborough, compared with 20 photographs in Castlemaine. Here are several responses to the question “Do you think that this is a place that you might return to after you leave for study or travel?”

**Tessa:** *I reckon I will, yeah ‘cause it feels like home. I like the homey feeling.*

**Bobby:** *Yeah, I will always be here. The house I’m living in now, I’ll probably live in for the rest of my life. [Ember: Yeah?] Yeah. I love to travel and that, but I will always come back. Yeah.*

**Greg:** *Hmmm, if my family and that are still here. I would [come] back. It’s a good place.*

Here we can see that these participants are “placed by” their towns; their families and family homes provide the most significant focus for investment in place. This contrasts with the findings of many children’s geographers that young people experience the home as heavily regulated by adults and lacking in privacy (Aitken, 2001; Corrigan, 1979; Matthews, Limb, *et al.*, 2000; Skelton, 2000; Valentine, 2004). These young people in Maryborough, on the other hand indicate that the home is a place of comfort, free of surveillance and judgement, providing a “homey feeling”. Frances, also suggests she would return to Maryborough – and in fact wishes she did not need to leave for study. Her reasons for desiring to stay are largely based around family and the familiarity of place and sense of community (which is also felt



as double-edged, as evidenced in Chapter 6 on privacy and surveillance). Here I ask Frances what she would take from her home town if she had to leave and was not able to return:

**Frances:** *1d: Um... [pause] I was going to say there's not really much I would want to take but my actual house. Yeah that would be awesome if I could do that, but yeah, if I had to choose anything, like we've got basically everything else that every other town has really.*

Frances suggests that her house is the most unique and important part of her home place – outside of her home she suggests that Maryborough is indistinguishable of other places.

Savage (2010) argues that the “ability to value places is dependent on having a wide enough set of reference points to allow comparison and evaluation” (p. 18). Here Nina points to this directly, when I probe her for how she envisions her future location.

**Nina:** *Um, not too sure in all honesty. [The] Carisbrook, Maryborough area is the only real place that I know. Because we tried to exclude travel cos one of my brothers is autistic and he has a tight schedule. He'll come home from school, he'll take off his shoes by the back door and then he'll stay at home. So if we want to go places for an overnight stay, we have to give him about two weeks in advance notice and we have to count the sleeps down – cos he doesn't go by days.*

Here Nina provides a direct evidence of the difficulty of valuing places, and therefore choosing where to place oneself – due to a lack of reference points for place – attributed in this case to a lack of mobility due to familial constraints.

Sara is the only participant in Maryborough who actively seeks to move out of Maryborough for personal growth reasons:

**Ember:** *Yeah, so – do you know where you want to go when you leave?*

**Sara:** *Um, yeah, I think I want to move to Melbourne. But then I do want to move back eventually. I don't think I want to grow up – I mean not grow up, but I don't want to stay in Melbourne forever I just do want to get out of Maryborough for a little bit. Just to see what else is out there I guess.*

In this sense, Sara is most similar to the majority of Castlemaine participants – while she likes the town, she sees it as subjectively limiting, and feels the need to leave her small home town to experience other places. The driver for her to return is associated with a combination of family, family home and a sense of community.

Overall, Maryborough participants are much less likely to have ambitions to leave their home town than Castlemaine participants. In Maryborough, attachment to place is more grounded in practical attachment to family and familiarity. Their place is experienced positively as the place where they feel comfortable and at home, even as they move out of their own family homes and into independence.

### 11.3 Discussion

Young people's envisioning of their future residential locations is bound up in a struggle between desire (imaginative, fanciful) and intention (based in a sense of what is achievable). Frances desires to stay in Maryborough, but intends to move to Ballarat in order to access further education. Eli desires to move away from his mother's Castlemaine home and live in America, somewhere near the beach – however unlikely that may be, given that he is dependent in many ways on care provided by his family and will find it difficult to acquire economic capital independently to fulfil this dream. Likewise, in her late teens Lizzie envisioned never coming back to live in Castlemaine, but she did, and now has no desire or intention to leave.

This chapter illustrates that there is not a direct correlation between young people's place attachment and their desires or intentions to stay in or to leave (and return to) their home

town. Attachment to family and the family home has a greater impact on young people deciding to stay in or return to their home towns than attachment to cultural features of the place itself. A strong, positive, affective relationship to place, on the other hand, appears to contribute to young people desiring to leave their home town.

The diagram below illustrates the participants' envisioned future location, organised by region and reason for choosing place. As indicated in the data analysis in the preceding section, the cohort in Maryborough demonstrated a more functional relationship with place – which Savage conceptualises as “dwelling” (Savage, 2010). Hence, we can see that the strongest pull towards place for the Maryborough participants is for family and structural factors (predominantly access to education). The field of envisioned future location for young people in Maryborough, in general is much closer to home than that of the cohort in Castlemaine. The predominant reasons offered for envisioned future location in the Castlemaine cohort was for personal growth – and personal growth combined with structural opportunities (access to education and employment).

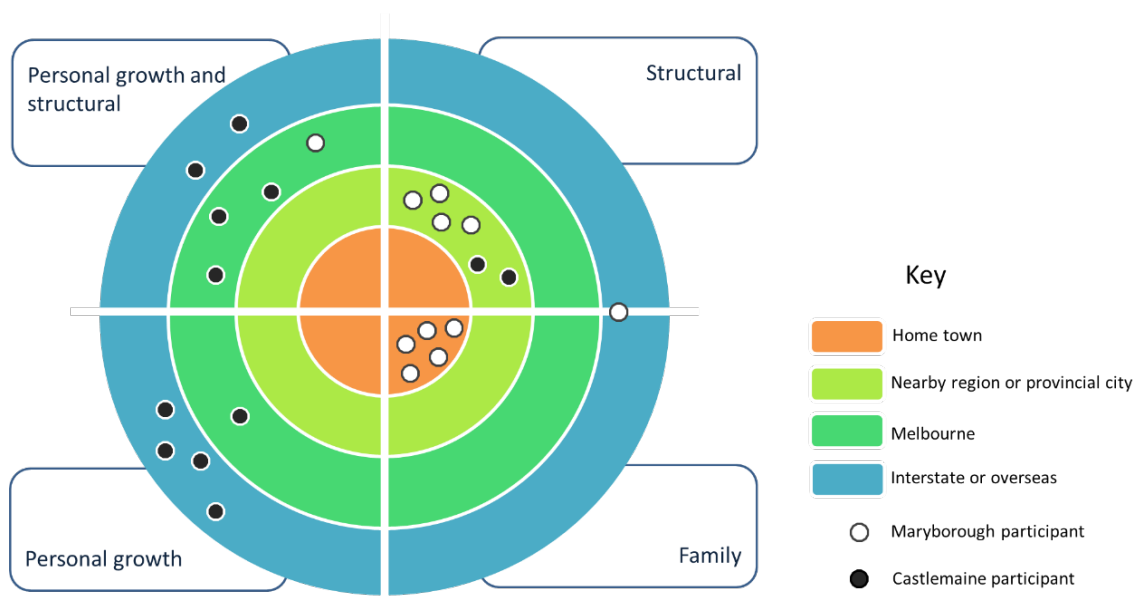


Figure 17 Towards a model for young people's place attachment and envisioned futures<sup>8</sup>

Source: Ember Parkin

The table below illustrates the envisioned future locations and reasons for individual respondents. This is assessed in relation to the level of spatial agency (on a scale of very low to very high) as well as the nature of their place relationship (positive, ambivalent, negative) emergent in the photo elicitation data. The table illustrates that a positive relationship with home town has little bearing on whether the young people envision staying in their home towns.

<sup>8</sup> Note – this diagram includes the regions of relocation for Lizzie and Alex based on where they went to when they left secondary education – to align their stage of life with the rest of the participants. While now their desire is to stay in their home towns – though Alex suggests he will likely relocate to Melbourne to be with his girlfriend.

Table 5  
*Envisioned locational choices Castlemaine and Maryborough participants*

Person	Place relationship	Level of spatial agency	Desire to stay or leave, return or not?	Go where?	Reason for desire to stay or go
MARYBOROUGH					
Mark	Negative	Low	Leave, not return	Regional WA	Structural
Karl	Negative	High	Leave, not return	Rural area	Structural
Frances	Ambivalent	Low	Leave, then return	Ballarat	Leave structural; return family
Greg	Ambivalent	Low	Leave, then return	Ballarat	Leave structural; return family
Sara	Positive	High	Leave, then return	Melbourne	Leave personal growth; return place
Tessa	Positive	Mid	Leave, then return	Ballarat	Leave structural; return family
Jacki	Ambivalent	Mid	Stay	Maryborough	Family
Megan	Negative	Very low	Stay	Maryborough	Family
Nina	Ambivalent	Mid	Stay	Maryborough	Family
Bobby	Positive	Very high	Stay	Maryborough	Place, family
Lola	Positive	High	Stay	Maryborough	Place, family
CASTLEMAINE					
Jacob	Ambivalent	Mid	Leave, maybe return	Bendigo	Structural
Duncan	Negative	High	Leave, not return	Unsure	Place
Naomi	Positive	High	Leave, not return	Melbourne	Personal growth
Julia	Positive	Very high	Leave, not return	Overseas, Melbourne	Personal growth
Grace	Positive	Very high	Leave, not return	Melbourne, overseas	Personal growth
Dominic	Positive	Very high	Leave, not return	Interstate, overseas	Personal growth
Bodhi	Positive	High	Leave then return	Melbourne	Leave structural, personal growth; return place
Isabelle	Positive	High	Leave, then return	Melbourne via Bendigo	Leave structural, personal growth; return family
Eli	Positive	High	Leave, then return	Overseas	Personal growth, return place / family
Rebecca	Positive	Very High	Leave, then return	Bendigo or Melbourne	Leave structural; return place / family
Alex	Positive	High	Left and returned, may leave again	Melbourne	Left personal growth and education; returned place / family
Lizzie	Positive	Very High	Left and returned, will stay	Overseas	Left personal growth; Returned place / family

There appears to be a misalignment between proactive place attachment and desire to stay in place. This demonstrates a potential correlation between low spatial agency and a low likelihood of the cultural aspects of place being a driver in making future locational choices. High spatial agency also appears to correlate with place or personal growth being an important factor in choices about future locations. Gustafson (2014) argues that place attachment researchers have often considered attachment to place (diagnosable through residential place-continuity) as positive, and mobility as negative.

Local roots, community ties, and strong emotional bonds with one's home place have been described as importance sources of well-being, whereas mobility has been associated with uprootedness and disintegration. (Gustafson, 2014, p. 38)

However, the picture emerging in my research – particularly in the outwardly mobile cohorts – is not of a subjective disintegration associated with leaving home. The evidence has illustrated that these young people consider relocation key to personal growth. This reflects an emerging theme in place attachment research whereby “mobility is associated with development, personal growth, and cosmopolitan open-mindedness, whereas place attachment and localism represent parochialism and restricted opportunities” (Gustafson, 2014, p. 38). However, place attachment research that examines mobility often steadies its gaze on people's attachment to their adopted places of residence. “In the era of increased mobility,” writes Lewicka (2011) place attachment research “should be able to identify mechanisms through which people become attached even to those places that are unrelated to their family history, long-time residence, or are even culturally alien” (p 51).

My research differs from that frame by illustrating that mobility itself plays an important part in creating a positive attachment to place in the case of Castlemaine. Much of the foundation of young people's relationship with their home town in Castlemaine relates to sites which provide a symbolic value – to which young people have discussed forming a

reflexive attachment. This indicates that the young participants in Castlemaine appear to develop a more active, subjective investment in place – and therefore wish to seek out other places which they can engage in reflexively for their ongoing subjective development. This supports Easthope's (2009) contention that young people are able to develop their identities through both mobility and attachment to place – it is not an either-or scenario.

Guftason (2014) conceptualises mobile place attachment as “place as routes” rather than “place as roots” (p. 39). The participants in this study who envision leaving their home towns for personal growth reasons comfortably reflect the conceptualisation of *place as routes*. In a sense this also reflects Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's (2005) notion of “elective belonging” in which people select residential places based around values, symbolic connections, aesthetics and notions of identity (Savage *et al.*, 2005). Savage (2010) notes that elective belonging is predominantly a middle-class phenomenon, whereas working class place attachment is described more readily by the notion of “dwelling” (discussed in the preceding section).

In face of globalisation and a general focus on mobility, Corbett (2007) argues that rural young people “are encouraged to forget place-based identities and to assume mobile and flexible self-constructions” as traditional rural industries and economies are being undergoing transformation (p. 772). In a study of young people's out-migration from rural areas in Canada, Corbett (2007) found that the young people who were not outwardly mobile tended to have a limited field of vision of future possibilities, in terms of either education or in terms of location (p. 785). This ties into Prince's (2014) contention that place may have a significant impact on the future self-concepts of young people – contributing to either an “expansive and hopeful” or a “blunted” sense of possibility (pp. 699-700). Marzi (2017) also argues that social mobility is deeply connected with aspiration and spatial mobility (Marzi, 2017). The impact of class-related factors on the findings of this study cannot be ignored.

Educational aspirations and options are an important aspect of mobility, especially given the absence of tertiary education institutions in small towns. As indicated in the table below, five of the Castlemaine participants were either currently studying or had a desire to study a university degree in a field related to arts, media, music or design, one in a double degree of law and science, and two in social work. These educational and career aspirations of the Castlemaine participants are vastly different to those of the participants in Maryborough, which were largely gendered, service and trades based.<sup>9</sup>

Table 6  
*Participant education engagement / intentions*

Location	Study at University	Study at TAFE	Undertake apprenticeship	Currently studying post-secondary	No further study
Castlemaine	7	1	0	3	2
Maryborough	1	6	3	0	1

Tranter's (2012) study observes that schools in areas of significant socioeconomic disadvantage often only offer subjects on the low end of the "curriculum hierarchy", thus acting as a barrier to university entry for young people from areas of social and economic disadvantage. In this sense Tranter (2012) argues that school curricula provides a vehicle for reproduction and entrenchment of social class. Whether or not this is the case in Maryborough, is difficult to say, as the majority of my research participants there left the mainstream schooling system and were completing their secondary education through applied learning (VCAL) at TAFE. VCAL programs are geared towards vocational training rather than university level education. While university is not the sole post-school activity to increase chances of social mobility, as Tranter (2012) argues, the funnelling of disadvantaged

<sup>9</sup> While this difference attests to the class and social differences between the communities, it should also be noted that the means of recruitment may also play a part in this difference and these are not representative samples.



young people into low-skill vocational education tends to reproduce and entrench disadvantage as these trades become more casualised and precarious, with few opportunities for careers advancement (p. 913). This is related to Skeggs' (2004a) argument that choice is a resource to which different people have different levels of access, and through the conditioning of the habitus certain aspirations can sit outside of some people's knowledge and "plausibility structures" (p. 139).

Jamieson (2000) argues that children from middle-class families take migration for granted due to the fact that:

Only children in solidly middle-class families typically take it for granted that they are destined for a 'good job' from a very early age. So middle-class children often take migration for granted. (p. 209)

Hence, young people's educational aspirations and their envisioned future locations are significantly interrelated. As we have seen in the two preceding chapters on mobility and a dichotomous community in Castlemaine, the habitus modalities of the young participants in Castlemaine are predominantly aligned with the creative classes. Therefore, these participants have "plausibility structures" (Skeggs, 2004a) which cater for aspiration towards education in disciplines like arts, media, or international studies, but also to have the privilege of valuing personal growth and development as an important part of the life narrative.

#### 11.4 Conclusion

Place attachment is not the prime factor in determining whether young people will build a future in their home towns. As we have seen in Castlemaine, people can have deep attachment to place and still want to leave. Conversely, as the Maryborough research shows, young people can have shallow attachment to place and still want to stay. Other factors are more important. For those who wish to stay, the presence of family is a strong

influencing factor. For those who wish to or need to leave, structural factors such as education and employment, and cultural factors such as a desire to live a full life are important. This is not to suggest that place attachment does not play a role in decisions to leave, stay or to envision a return home.

In addition to place attachment, the notion of struggle is presented as an important consideration, better capturing young people's ambivalent and practical approaches to transitions and mobility. Young people struggle with conflicting impulses and emotions. They make difficult decisions to leave things behind that they love. Or to stay in places of limited appeal or opportunity, in order to maintain and maximise other, more important relationships and attachments, such as to family. Place attachment – its presence or absence – rather adds a complicating element to the struggles that already exist for young people, far from providing the decisive factor in the struggle to negotiate future living arrangements.

I had sought to establish the cultural features of place that enhance or diminish place attachment in young people – with a view to understanding how this might in turn affect young people's future locational choices. Instead, I have discovered that the quality of place *relationship* is significant for young people – as it relates to place identity, spatial agency, aspiration and investments in subjective development. Attachment itself is perhaps not the best indicator – especially if, as Lewicka (2011) argues, it is “diagnosed” through quantitative scales through desire or intention to be in a place.

## Chapter 12. Conclusion

This thesis has examined young people's place relationships in small towns. The majority of place attachment research examines personal, psychological aspects place attachment – examining the role of individual and collective experience in fostering attachment and the effects that attachment has on the individual (Lewicka, 2011, p. 222). The design of the thesis has directly responded to Lewicka's (2011) and Scannell and Gifford's (2010) claims that much research on place attachment neglects to engage with the actual place. Similarly to the field of place attachment research, there is little work investigating the out-migration of young people from rural areas that actually assesses the "spatial and social complexity" of rural youth out-migration (C. Gibson & Argent, 2008, p. 136). A lot of research examining rural young people's out-migration focuses on the impacts upon the town (for instance Alston, 2004; Argent & Walmsley, 2008; Salt, 2003) or else on structural factors such as access to employment and education (Theodori & Theodori, 2015). A limited number of studies (for instance, Eacott & Sonn, 2006; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008; Pretty *et al.*, 2003) examine the non-structural aspects of place which contribute to rural young people's migration choices. The thesis was designed in a way that could respond to this gap in understanding of the role of *place* in affecting place attachment and rural youth out-migration. Hence, the primary research question was framed as follows:

*What are the cultural features of small towns that affect young people's place attachments?*

Children and young people's geography researchers have examined the impact of the dynamics of place have upon young people's social and physical mobility. For instance, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) argue that young people's sense of futures are influenced greatly by "their sense of where they belong - as being deeply entangled with their social and spatial location" (p. 501). Prince (2014) extensively reviews research studies assessing the

relationship between place, attachment and young people's sense of future self-concept. In pointing to areas for further research, Prince asks: "Do youth with place identities characterized by positive attachment and belonging exhibit more hopeful or expansive future self-concept?" (p. 712). The second research question has been framed in direct response to this:

*How does place attachment affect the ways that young people from small towns envision their future locational choices?*

## 12.1 Method

The thesis has presented a qualitative, ethnographic study that pays close attention to young people's engagements with their home towns. The auto-photo-elicitation method has provided an abundant source of qualitative data from which I have drawn out, interpreted and analysed the findings summarised here. As Harper (2012) argues, "the knowledge of outside researchers, no matter how involved they might have been with the community, could never approximate to the understanding reflected in the images made by the subject-collaborators" (p. 191). This was an appropriate method to apply a light touch as a researcher – "step-in, step-out ethnography" as Madden (2010, pp. 81-82) calls it. In some cases the photo-based method helped to provide more detail than the verbal testimony offered by young people in the interviews. For instance, the appreciation of heritage fabric in Maryborough expressed by a number of young participants. Some participants, such as Greg and Megan were not able to easily articulate the value of these sites – except that they were old. Here the photographs provide a body of evidence of what is perhaps a tacitly-felt rather than analytically-reflected value of heritage.

The photo-elicitation method also brought some challenges. In some cases the young people who were participating didn't appear to have read or paid attention to the information I had

provided them to guide them in their choice of what to photograph. In one case two different participants took two nearly identical sets of photographs.

## 12.2 Limitations and opportunities for further research

When I embarked upon this research, I was driven by the premise that young people's out-migration was bad for the vibrancy and sustainability of small towns. Initially I sought to understand how small towns could possibly create a culture of inclusion, creativity and engagement that would encourage young people to actively choose to continue being in a place. I had assumed that a place attachment framework would help to separate those who were attached and wanted to stay in their home towns from those who weren't attached and wanted to leave. Far more than I anticipated, interrelated themes of agency and of social and physical mobility have permeated the research findings.

This is a small-scale study of two distinctly different small towns in Victoria. As a small, qualitative study, there was no attempt made to gain a representative sample of young people from either town. I have pointed out in Chapter 4 that the way in which the recruitment of research participants evolved in Castlemaine is likely to have played a significant role in affecting the cohort of respondent there. In Maryborough, participants were recruited in institutional settings of TAFE and high school, while no participants were found in response to advertisements on social media. In Castlemaine, on the other hand, the majority of participants volunteered after seeing an advertisement on a Facebook group. The phenomenon of young people volunteering in this way in Castlemaine (outside of an institutional setting – involving more direct contact and negotiation) could indicate that they were quite engaged and interested in the dynamic of their community. This affects the study in two distinct ways. First, the nature of the photographic study seemed to attract participants in Castlemaine who were predisposed to an interest in creative pursuits. Second, the recruitment method is likely to have contributed to the cohort in Castlemaine

exhibiting high levels of self-reflexivity. They were at ease reflecting on ideas of place, identity, and culture, and had strong interests in self-statement. As Skeggs and Loveday (2012) note, self-reflexivity is built through access to resources such as education and cultural capital. So it is highly likely that this has affected the ways in which Castlemaine is then socially constructed by the young people in this study, for instance through exhibiting high levels of spatial confidence and agency as well as high educational aspiration.

The participants in Castlemaine exhibited an acute awareness of the nature of a dualistic, dichotomous community, supporting Waitt and C. Gibson's (2006) assertion that creative migration causes social dislocation. However, the participants in Castlemaine mostly aligned themselves with the creative, "artsy" side of that divide. Therefore, further study examining young people's place engagement from the "other" side of that dichotomy would be valuable. A deeper examination of the role of social class (both individual and community) on impacting the nature of young people's place relationship would also be beneficial.

### 12.3 Research findings

#### 12.3.1 Creativity is widely valued by young people, but is distributed unevenly

Where Chris Gibson (2008) investigates whether regional creative industries can help to mitigate the out-migration of young people from regional areas he asserts that creative industries can be a vital means of engaging young people. Creative industries often rely on skill bases that can be developed at school (for instance, music, media, computer literacy), and young people are generally well attuned to contemporary fashions and trends (C. Gibson, 2008, p. 187). By examining one town with a strong focus on creativity in economic development, and another with an economic development focus on retail and service industries, an emphasis on this study is to understand the implications of creativity-focused regional development on young people's relationship with place. Young people from both towns in this study value viewing and participating in various forms of creative practice.

Young people in Castlemaine communicate an overt appreciation of publicly-accessible, internally-generated creative practice – whether through the Council-sanctioned street art program, live music events or monthly artists’ markets. In this sense, it appears that young people in Castlemaine are benefiting from the resources and cultural planning that have accompanied the creative gentrification of their home town.

Creative practice is strongly valued by young people in Maryborough as well. However, this was generally expressed through individual creative practices such as drawing, singing, playing music or painting, carried out in the privacy of one’s own home. Discussions of publicly accessible creativity were wholly limited to an appreciation of externally-generated street art on freight trains travelling through the town. The transposition of creativity into other public spaces was rarely observed by young people in Maryborough. In some cases young people view this as a deficiency within their home town or a stark juxtaposition between the values of the young person and the town which negatively affected place attachment.

### 12.3.2 Surveillance affects agency, which affects sense of place

This research has highlighted that while strong social capital, signified by a “tight-knit community” (Jackie), can be experienced positively by young people, it can also have negative consequences. A close community can be experienced as a form of social control and can diminish spatial agency in young people. In turn, this limits the capacity or desire for young people to actively engage with public space. This phenomenon of the rural panopticon (Philo et al., 2017) predominantly arose in Maryborough where a close community was also felt most strongly. My research here differs from a range of mainly British children and young people’s geographers who assert that young people experience a lack of privacy and agency in the home and so take to the street to hang out with friends, using increased spatial agency in public space to alleviate boredom (for example, T. Hall et

al., 1999; Horton et al., 2014; Leyshon, 2011; Matthews, Limb, et al., 2000; Matthews, Taylor, et al., 2000; Valentine, 2004). In Maryborough however, the double-edged nature of a close community means that young people can feel a lack of privacy on the street and in other public spaces. Hence, young people appear to socially construct Maryborough as boring due to a felt lack of spatial agency through which to alleviate their own boredom (Joelsson, 2015b). Agency can be diminished due to community surveillance.

A close community can be experienced both positively and negatively by young people. However, this thesis suggests that the negatively experienced aspect has a greater effect on the spatial behaviours of young people, particularly when it comes to the use (or avoidance) of public space. To reclaim spatial agency young people in Maryborough are likely to retreat to their homes and carve out spaces in bushlands in which they experience space privately, playfully, and creatively. The research findings here relate to Wood's (2016) reminder to look for examples of "agency within liminality", to investigate the tactics that young people use to "subvert and resist adult impositions, to carve out spaces of their own both within and beyond" their spatial marginalisation (p. 488). This is echoed in the experience of young people in Castlemaine, who express a greater sense of spatial agency over public and commercial spaces in town than young people in Maryborough, but also highly value bushland spaces surrounding the town as a space to be spatially independent, autonomous and out of the adult gaze. These results differ starkly from Matthews et al.'s (2011) discussion of a study of rural young people in Britain, which asserts that rural young people are unlikely to spend time in naturally-based outdoor spaces.

### 12.3.3 Mobility builds attachment

We have seen how the geographical location of Maryborough (on the outer side of a regional city) and of Castlemaine (between capital city and regional city) affects rail infrastructure and services which in turn directly impacts spatial mobility for young people. It



is important to note that while the presence and availability of public transport is a structural issue, it also has significant social and cultural implications. The thesis argues that the train doesn't merely represent a way out of town for young people, but is an integral aspect of the way Castlemaine itself is experienced. The findings here support Marzi's (2017) claims that a place in which a young person grows up in can affect physical mobility (and immobility) and consequently affects young people's capacity for social mobility. Through using the train to Bendigo and to Melbourne, young people in Castlemaine are able to practice incremental mobility and spatial independence; to build social capital and cultural capital; and to gain access to public spaces outside of the close community of the small town. This potentially offers young people privacy and agency in which to experiment with behaviours that might attract surveillance and negative attention in the home town. As a result of this, young people in Castlemaine construct their home town as networked and with fluid borders. I argue that this has implications for how young people envision their futures as it may enhance their "plausibility structures" (Skeggs, 2004a) through building spatial independence and confidence. Whereas, in Maryborough, limited rail and/or coach services mean that the provincial cities of Ballarat and Bendigo and the capital city of Melbourne are not accessible in the same way as in Castlemaine. These findings support existing research that identifies that mobility and place attachment are not mutually exclusive (Gustafson, 2014; Gieling, Vermeij & Haartsen, 2017). Through the use of Low's (2016) concept of translocal the findings here also support claims that place is fluid and networked rather than contained and bounded (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b; Massey, 1998). Whilst in Maryborough, the use of public transport to aid in physical mobility rarely arose, in both case study towns there arose examples of young people enriching their associations and experience of their home towns through socially constructing space with a transnational imagination. Young people were identified to socially construct spaces with a "multi-scalar" approach (Gorman-Murray, Darian-Smith, C. Gibson, 2006), imposing experiences, concepts

and images of bodily through to global space onto their rural home towns with positive effects on place association.

#### 12.3.4 Rural young people's place attachment doesn't correlate to intention or desire to stay in place

This thesis has examined how the nature of young people's place relationship impacts upon their sense of locational and social futures. Significantly, the research has established that there appears to be an inverse relationship between strong, comprehensive place attachment in young people and the desire to remain in place (or even the desire return to a place after garnering wider experiences through travel, study and work). This finding is distinctly different to other place attachment research with adults which suggests that place attachment is correlated with the desire and intent to continue being in the place (Lewicka, 2014; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Issues associated with class, aspirations and family attachment are also implicated in young people's decision-making in planning to stay in, or leave a small town. In Castlemaine, aspirations for personal growth and adding a range of places to one's life experience are a strong driver for young people's decisions to leave. The appearance of personal growth as a driver of rural young people's migration is rare in the literature (for exception see Easthope & Gabriel, 2008). Likewise, negative or ambivalent place relationship does not mean that a young person will seek to leave a place. Instead, as was reflected by the participants in Maryborough, young people's proximity-maintaining behaviour can be driven by a "functional" (Savage, 2010) relationship to place, embedded in attachment to family and the family home, or structural factors such as access to education and employment.

The relationship between class and aspiration cannot be ignored in this investigation. For it appears that the classed values and experiences of middle class young people in

Castlemaine, offer them the assumption that they are destined to experience greater things.

Or as Jamieson (2000) puts it:

Only children from middle-class families typically take it for granted that they are destined for a 'good job' from a very early age. So middle-class children take migration for granted. (p. 210)

Nine out of twelve participants in Castlemaine expressed ambitions for university study and careers in creative industry fields such as design, media and communications, architecture and fine art. Conversely, in Maryborough, employment and career aspirations were focused predominantly on gender-based trades and services. Young people in Castlemaine may be supported by a middle-class confidence to assume that future work will be *both* financially and personally rewarding, young people's "plausibility structures" (Skeggs, 2004a, p. 139) in Maryborough in general provide a more contained sense of aspiration, focused on immediate financial gains. Hence, the aspirations for physical mobility are also more contained.

This research contrasts other place attachment research that suggests place attachment is correlated with "proximity maintaining behaviour" (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 4); for rural young people place attachment does not appear to equate to a desire to remain in place. In light of this, further research is needed to understand other outcomes of place attachment for young people. For instance, do young people who have a positive place relationship return to their home towns sooner after leaving than those who do not? Do they express more community-mindedness? Are they more engaged?

Whilst this research commenced with the intent of discovering the ways in which place engagement could work against rural outmigration for young people, the findings are far more nuanced. This research has pointed towards a model that could be developed for understanding how the nature of young people's place engagements might affect the way

they envision their future locations. The key finding here is that place attachment is not so relevant to informing young people’s “stay or go” decisions as the literature might have indicated. However, the research here also provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between place engagement and the drivers of young people’s locational decisions. This is illustrated in the diagram below. The horizontal axis, depicted in orange, is a spectrum of young people’s spatial agency. In the research findings, this is reflected by a willingness and ability to navigate across a broad range of spaces within the home town, a willingness and ability to leave their town in search of further options for leisure and entertainment, and a willingness and ability to take up space and use it imaginatively and creatively – even in the face of adult surveillance and spatial control. The vertical axis reflects the drivers of the young person’s envisioned future location. This is represented on a spectrum from functional aspects of place – employment, education and family – to symbolic aspects of place – experience, subjectivity, values.

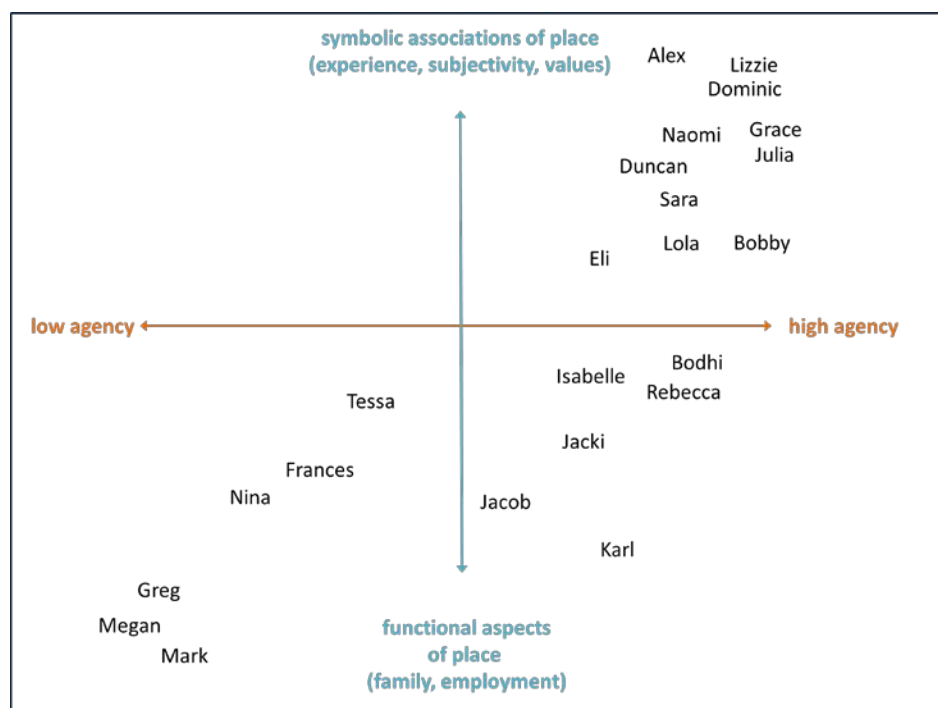


Figure 18 A model for understanding the relationship between place engagement and young people's envisioned locational choices  
 Source: Ember Parkin

The model above illustrates that low spatial agency makes it difficult or unlikely that people will make subjective investments in place. Ultimately the research has identified that place in itself is not a driver of locational choice for those without a high sense of spatial agency. Rather, it appears that spatial agency is vital for developing a positive and deep sense of place attachment, which in turn might form young people's expectations about creating connections to symbolic aspects of place. The model emerging from this thesis indicates that high spatial agency within the young person's place relationship could help enhance young people's ability to actively make choices about their locations, rather than merely being "placed" by their location (Savage, 2010). For disadvantaged and marginalised young people, could increasing their spatial agency help to enable an active rather than passive navigation of the world?

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Appendix A – Maryborough photographs

170 photographs, 11 participants

1a Greg



1a-01



1a-02



1a-03



1a-04



1a-05



1a-06



1a-07



1a-08



1a-09



1a-10



1a-11



1a-12



1a-13



1a-14



1a-15



1a-16



1a-17



1a-18



1a-19



1a-20



1a-21



1a-22



1a-23



1a-24



1b – Mark



1b- (1)



1b- (2)



1b- (3)



1b- (4)



1b- (5)



1b- (6)



1b- (7)



1b- (8)



1b- (9)



1b- (10)



1b- (11)



1b- (12)



1b- (13)



1b- (14)



1b- (15)



1b- (16)



1b- (17)



1b- (18)



1b- (19)



1b- (20)



1b- (21)



1b- (22)



1b- (23)



1b- (24)



1b- (25)



1b- (26)



1b- (27)

1d – Frances



1d- (1)



1d- (2)



1d- (3)



1d (4)



1d (5)

1e – Bobby



1e (1)



1e (2)



1e (3)



1e (4)



1e (5)



1e (6)



1e (7)



1e (8)



1e (9)



1e (10)



1e (11)



1e (12)



1e (13)



1e (14)



1e (15)

1f – Megan



1f- (1)



1f- (2)



1f- (3)



1f- (4)



1f- (5)



1f- (6)



1f- (7)



1f- (8)





1f- (9)



1f- (11)



1f- (12)



1f- (13)



1f- (14)



1f- (15)

1g – Karl



1g - (1)



1g - (2)



1g - (3)

1h – Nina



1h - (1)



1h - (2)



1h - (3)



1h - (4)



1h - (5)



1h - (6)



1h - (7)



1h - (8)



1h - (9)



1h - (10)



1h - (11)



1h - (12)



1h - (13)



1h - (14)



1h - (15)



1h - (16)



1h - (17)



1h - (18)

1h – Sara



1i - (1)



1i - (2)



1i - (3)



1i - (4)



1i - (5)



1i - (6)



1i - (7)



1i - (8)



1i - (9)



1i - (10)



1i - (11)



1i - (12)



1i - (13)



1i - (14)



1i - (15)



1i - (16)



1i - (17)



1i - (18)



1i - (19)



1i - (20)



1i - (21)



1i - (22)



1i - (23)



1i - (24)



1j – Lola



1j - (1)



1j - (2)



1j - (3)



1j - (4)



1j - (5)



1j - (6)



1j - (7)



1j - (8)



1j - (9)



1j - (10)



1j - (11)



1j - (12)



1j - (13)



1j - (14)



1j - (15)



1j - (16)



1j - (17)



1j - (18)



1j - (19)



1j - (20)



1j - (21)



1j - (22)



1j - (23)



1j - (24)



1j - (25)



1j - (26)



1j - (27)

1k – Jackie



1k - (1)



1k - (2)



1k - (3)



1k - (4)

1l Tessa



1L - (1)



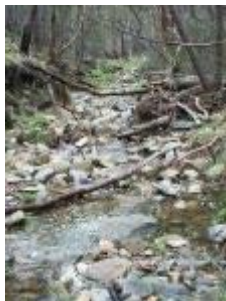
1L - (2)



1L - (3)



1L - (4)



1L - (5)



1L - (6)



1L - (7)

## Appendix B – Castlemaine photographs

226 photographs, 12 participants

### 3a – Isabelle



3a - (1)



3a - (2)



3a - (3)



3a - (4)



3a - (5)

12.3.5 3b – Jacob



3b - (1)



3b - (2)



3b - (3)



3b - (4)



3b - (5)



3b - (6)



3b - (7)



3b - (8)





3b - (9)



3b - (10)



3b - (11)



3b - (12)



3b - (13)



3b - (14)



3b - (15)



3b - (16)



3b - (17)



3b - (18)

12.3.6 3d – Duncan



3d - (1)



3d - (2)



3d - (3)



3d - (4)



3d - (5)



3d - (6)



3d - (7)



3d - (8)



3d - (9)



3d - (10)



3d - (11)



3d - (12)



3d - (13)



3d - (14)



3d - (15)



3d - (16)



3d - (17)



3d - (18)



3d - (19)



3d - (20)



3d - (21)



3d - (22)



3d - (23)



3d - (24)



3d - (25)



3d - (26)

3f – Julia



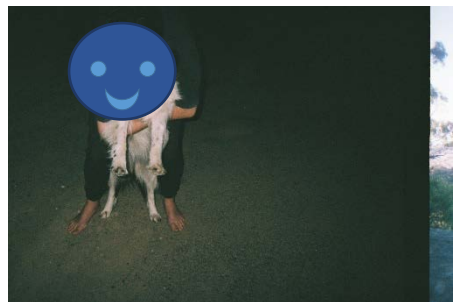
3f (1)



3f (2)



3f (3)



3f (4)



3f (5)



3f (6)



3f (7)



3f (8)



3f (9)



3f (10)



3f (11)



3f (12)



3f (13)



3f (14)



3f (15)



3g – Alex



3G - (1)



3G - (2)



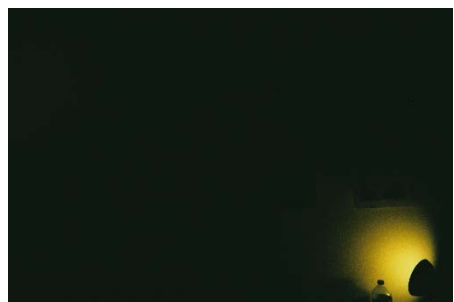
3G - (3)



3G - (4)



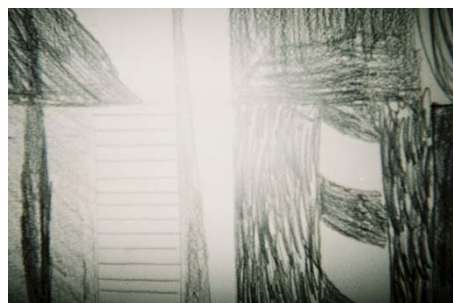
3G - (5)



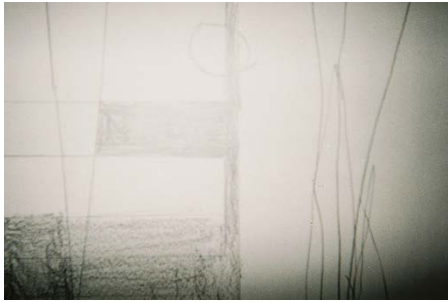
3G - (6)



3G - (7)



3G - (8)



3G - (9)



3G - (10)



3G - (11)



3G - (12)



3G - (13)



3G - (14)



3G - (15)

3h - Naomi



3H - (1)



3H - (2)



3H - (3)



3H - (4)



3H - (5)



3H - (6)



3H - (9)



3H - (8)



3H - (10)



3H - (11)



3H - (12)



3H - (13)

3i Dominic



3i - (1)



3i - (2)



3i - (3)



3i - (4)



3i - (5)



3i - (6)



3i - (7)



3i - (8)



3I - (9)



3I - (10)



3I - (11)



3I - (12)



3I - (13)



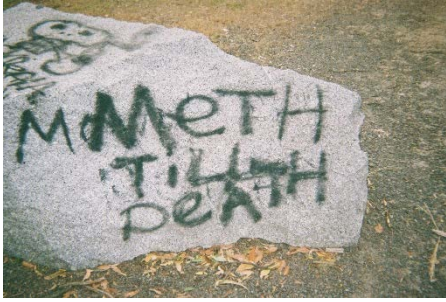
3I - (14)



3I - (15)



3I - (16)



3I - (17)



3I - (18)



3I - (19)



3I - (20)



3I - (21)



3I - (22)



3I - (23)



3I - (24)



31 - (25)



31 - (26)



31 - (27)



3j – Eli



3J (1)



3J (2)



3J (3)



3J (4)



3J (5)



3J (6)



3J (7)



3J (8)



3J (9)



3J (10)



3J (11)



3J (12)



3J (13)



3J (14)



3J (15)



3J (16)



3J (17)



3J (18)



3J (19)



3J (20)

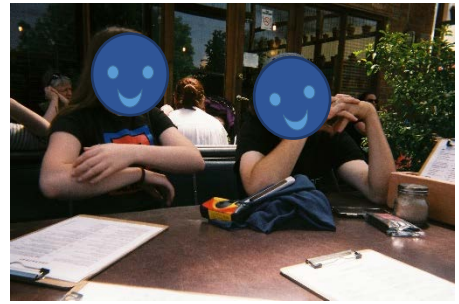


3J (21)

3k – Grace



3k - (1)



3k - (2)



3k - (3)



3k - (4)



3k - (5)



3k - (6)



3k - (7)



3k - (8)



3k - (9)



3k - (10)



3k - (11)



3k - (12)



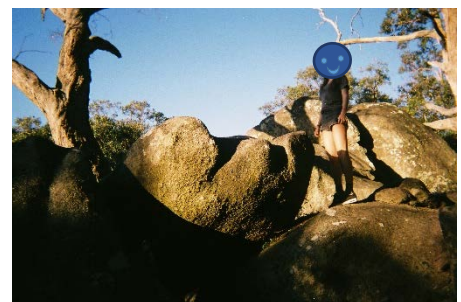
3k - (13)



3k - (14)



3k - (15)



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3k - (17)



3k - (18)



3k - (19)



3k - (20)



3k - (21)



3k - (22)



3k - (23)

3l – Lizzie



3L - (1)



3L - (2)



3L - (3)



3L - (4)



3L - (5)



3L - (6)



3L - (7)



3L - (8)



3L - (9)



3L - (10)



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3L - (12)



3L - (13)



3L - (14)



3L - (15)



3L - (16)





3L - (17)



3L - (18)



3L - (19)



3L - (20)



3L - (21)



3L - (22)



3L - (23)

3m – Rebecca



3M - (1)



3M - (2)



3M - (3)



3M - (4)



3M - (5)



3M - (6)



3M - (7)



3M - (8)



3M - (9)



3M - (10)



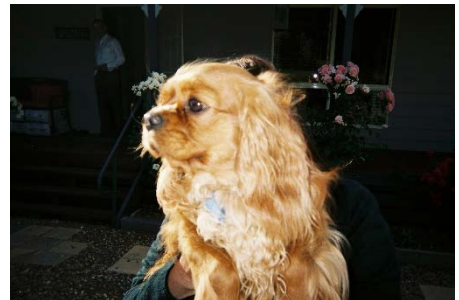
3M - (11)



3M - (12)



3M - (13)



3M - (14)



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3M - (18)



3M - (19)



3M - (20)



3M - (21)



3M - (22)



3M - (23)



3M - (24)

3n – Bodhi



3n (1)



3n (2)



3n (3)



3n (4)



3n (5)



3n (6)



3n (7)



3n (8)



3n (9)



3n (10)



3n (11)



3n (12)



3n (13)



3n (14)



3n (15)



3n (16)



3n (17)



3n (18)

## Appendix C – Human research ethics documentation

### Final report

# Annual/Final Project Report

Human Research Ethics Committee



<b>Please indicate the type of report</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report (Omit 3b & 5b) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final Report
<b>Project No:</b>	A16-016
<b>Project Name:</b>	Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns
<b>Principal Researcher:</b>	Keir Reeves
<b>Other Researchers:</b>	Ember Parkin
<b>Date of Original Approval:</b>	23 May 2016
<b>School / Section:</b>	Faculty of Education and Arts
<b>Phone:</b>	0431983376
<b>Email:</b>	e.parkin@federation.edu.au

**Please note:** For HDR candidates, this Ethics annual report is a separate requirement, in addition to your HDR Candidature annual report, which is submitted mid-year to [research.degrees@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.degrees@federation.edu.au).

<b>1) Please indicate the current status of the project:</b>			
<b>1a) Yet to start</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1b) Continuing</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1c) Data collection completed</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1d) Abandoned / Withdrawn:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1e) If the approval was subject to certain conditions, have these conditions been met? (If not, please give details in the comments box below )</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
<b>Comments:</b>			
<b>1f) Data Analysis</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not yet commenced	<input type="checkbox"/> Proceeding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> None
<b>1g) Have ethical problems been encountered in any of the following areas:</b>			
<b>Study Design</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No



<b>Recruitment of Subjects</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Finance</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Facilities, Equipment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
(If yes, please give details in the comments box below)		
<b>Comments:</b>		

<b>2a) Have amendments been made to the originally approved project?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<b>2b) If yes, was HREC approval granted for these changes?</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>Provide detail:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <b>Application for Amendment to an Existing Project</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <b>Change of Personnel</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <b>Extension Request</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> No	If you have made changes, but not had HREC approval, provide detail as to why this has not yet occurred:
<b>2c) Do you need to submit any amendments now?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <b>Application for Amendment to an Existing Project</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <b>Change of Personnel</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <b>Extension Request</b> <b>* NB: If 'Yes', <a href="#">download &amp; submit the appropriate request</a> to the HREC for approval:</b> <b>Please note: Extensions will not be granted retrospectively. Apply well prior to the project end date, to ensure continuity of HRE approval.</b>

<b>3a) Please indicate where you are storing the data collected during the course of this project: (Australian code for the Responsible conduct of Research Ch 2.2.2, 2.5 – 2.7)</b>
<p>Audio files, digital images and interview transcripts are being stored in a password-protected One-Drive folder.</p> <p>Film negatives and discs are being stored in a locked filing cabinet on University property at SMB E112.</p>
<b>3b) Final Reports: Advise when &amp; how stored data will be destroyed (Australian code for the Responsible conduct of Research Ch 2.1.1)</b>

Following the completion of the thesis and other publications, all digital files will be transferred to disk, and stored together with the non-digital files in a locked filing cabinet in the principle researcher's office for five years, after which time they will be securely destroyed.

**4) Have there been any events that might have had an adverse effect on the research participants OR unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project?**

No       Yes \* NB: If 'yes', please provide details in the comments box below:

**Comments:**

**5a) Please provide a short summary of results of the project so far (no attachments please):**

The research has resulted in the provision and analysis of photo-elicitation data for a social science PhD thesis, examining the relationship to place of young people in small towns in Victoria. While the thesis is ongoing, case study chapters on Castlemaine and Maryborough have been written. A chapter on all three towns in the study has also been written using stakeholder interview data to understand the nature of each place, and the biggest challenges that young people face in each town. Recruitment in Daylesford proved difficult, and a new ethics approval will be sought for a final burst of research fieldwork there.

**5b) Final Reports: Provide details about how the aims of the project, as stated in the application for approval, were achieved (or not achieved). (Australian code for the Responsible conduct of Research 4.4.1)**

The aim stated in the HREC application presented somewhat of a hypothesis: 'This PhD research aims to find ways that the parallel challenges of youth out-migration and creative social and economic development could be addressed together'. The research has not in fact resulted in proving this hypothesis. However, results are proving valuable in indicating that social class and surveillance have a significant impact on how young people engage with place and also that place attachment for young people may not impact place-related behaviours in the same way that they do adults [ie. choosing to stay in a place]. The place-related behaviour of choosing to stay in or to leave a small town for young people, appears to be more strongly linked to social class, mobility, as well as educational and employment aspiration, than linked to sense of place and place attachment.

# Annual/Final Project Report

Human Research Ethics Committee

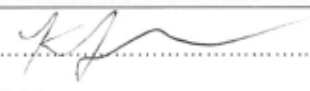
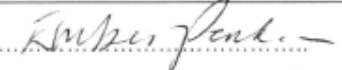


**6) Publications: Provide details of research dissemination outcomes for the previous year resulting from this project: eg: Community seminars; Conference attendance; Government reports and/or research publications**

Conference paper delivered at Australian Historical Association Conference in Ballarat, July 2016  
Thesis ongoing

**7) The HREC welcomes any feedback on:**

- Difficulties experienced with carrying out the research project; or
- Appropriate suggestions which might lead to improvements in ethical clearance and monitoring of research.

8) Signatures			
<b>Principal Researcher:</b>	 ..... Print name:	<b>Date:</b>	2/2/18
<b>Other/Student Researchers:</b>	 ..... Print name: Ember Parkin	<b>Date:</b>	2/2/18
	..... Print name:	<b>Date:</b>	

**Submit to the Ethics Officer, Mt Helen campus, by the due date:**  
[research.ethics@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@federation.edu.au)

# Consent Form



PROJECT TITLE:	Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns
RESEARCHERS:	Professor Keir Reeves (Supervisor) Ember Parkin (PhD Candidate)

Code number allocated to the participant:	
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**Consent – Please complete the following information:**

I, ..... of .....  
.....  
hereby consent to participate as a subject in the above research study.

The research program in which I am being asked to participate has been explained fully to me, verbally and in writing, and any matters on which I have sought information have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take photographs of my town that will form the basis of discussion in an interview and be used in the thesis and in academic journal articles and conference presentations.

I agree to have my interview recorded by a digital audio recorder.

I understand that:

- all information I provide (including interviews and photographs) will be treated with the strictest confidence and data will be stored separately from any listing that includes my name and address.
- aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals or books.
- *I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from it will not be used.*
- *once information has been aggregated it is unable to be identified, and from this point it is not possible to withdraw consent to participate.*

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: .....

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I understand that:

- while the research does not intend to cover any topics that are likely invoke stress or anxiety in the participants, if such responses occur, the researchers will refer the participant to Lifeline or Headspace and contact the parents of the participants where appropriate.
- all information I provide (including interviews and photographs) will be treated with the strictest confidence and data will be stored separately from any listing that includes my name and address.
- aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals or books.
- *I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from it will not be used.*
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SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: .....

**Consent of Parent/Guardian:**

I, ....., parent/guardian of ..... (minor's name)  
of ..... (address)  
hereby consent to ..... (minor's name) participating in the  
above research study.

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: .....

# Plain Language Information Statement

Centre for Collaborative Research in Australian History

<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>	Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns
<b>PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:</b>	Professor Keir Reeves, Supervisor (PhD, MA, BA Hons)
<b>STUDENT RESEARCHER:</b>	Ember Parkin, PhD Candidate (MA, BA Hons)

## **An invitation**

You are invited to participate in this PhD research project *Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns*. This research aims to understand what aspects of regional towns contribute to young peoples' attachment to place. The research hopes to find out how different aspects of place can contribute to sustainability in regional towns by sustaining an engaged population of young people. The study will focus on three towns in central Victoria – Daylesford, Castlemaine and Maryborough.

## **What will my participation involve?**

Your involvement would require you to take photographs (on a disposable camera, provided by the researcher) of spaces, places, activities and events in your town that you feel strongly about. The photographing will happen at your leisure over a two-to-three week period. Following that, we will arrange for the photographs to be developed and you will be required to participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview about the photographs and what you value about your town. The interview should take one-to-two hours of your time and will be held in one of the following locations as agreed upon: local Secondary School, Council Office meeting room, Public Library meeting room, or Neighbourhood House meeting room. You will be compensated for your time and contribution to this research with a \$20 gift card. You will be offered a digital copy of your own photographs.

## **How will my privacy be protected?**

Your photographs and interview recording will be assigned a code and will remain anonymous in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer for five years before being securely destroyed. Only the PhD researcher and Supervisor will have access to this data. No personal identifiers will be used in the thesis or any publications or conference presentations arising from the research. However, given the small sample size of the research study, it is likely that people who you are known to will be able to identify your responses in publications or presentations arising from the research. Photographs that contain identifiable people will be used only in the copy of the thesis for examination, and identifiable people in your photographs will be obscured in the final thesis and in any publication or presentation arising out of the thesis.

# Plain Language Information Statement



## Will I have to do anything I don't want to?

All participation in the project is entirely voluntary and you do not have to answer any question in the interview if you do not wish to. You can withdraw your consent to participate and stop participating at any stage before the data is processed. If you decide not to participate, you do not need to provide any reasons why. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and to withdraw or amend (*if appropriate*) any data during or at the end of the interview or any unprocessed data previously supplied.

## What will happen with this research?

This research is a PhD project, and the outcomes will be presented in a PhD Thesis, which will be available online and at the Federation University Australia library. Findings will also be presented at academic conferences, and in academic journals and books. The publications arising from this research will not include any information that identifies individual participants.

## Benefits and risks

It is very unlikely that you will experience any distress as a result of taking part in this research. However, if any of the questions cause you distress or concern we encourage you to discuss these concerns with a member of the research team and to contact Headspace 03 5304 4777, Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, or Lifeline on 13 11 44.

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled *Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns*, please contact the Principal Researcher, Professor Keir Reeves of the Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History (CRAH):

PH: 03 5327 9699

EMAIL: [k.reeves@federation.edu.au](mailto:k.reeves@federation.edu.au)

Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Federation University Ethics Officers, Research Services, Federation University Australia,  
P O Box 663 Mt Helen Vic 3353 or Northways Rd, Churchill Vic 3842.  
Telephone: (03) 5327 9785, (03) 5122 6446  
Email: [research.ethics@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@federation.edu.au)

CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

# Photo participant briefing

## Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History

<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>	Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns
<b>PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:</b>	Professor Keir Reeves, Supervisor (PhD, MA, BA Hons)
<b>STUDENT RESEARCHER:</b>	Ember Parkin, PhD Candidate (MA, BA Hons)

Thanks for agreeing to be a part of this project. You have been given a disposable camera and you are asked to take photographs over the next two weeks as you go about your normal life within (INSERT NAME OF TOWN) and surrounding areas.

You may like to think about photographing some things like:

- What is the first place you would take someone who is visiting and has never been to your town before?
- What part of your town/region would you take with you if you had to leave?
- What do you feel proud of about your town?
- What is the coolest thing about your town?
- Are there places that you go to when you need to feel inspired?
- Is there anything about your town that you don't feel proud of?

There may be other spaces, places, events, or things that you decide to photograph as well – some of them you may just like, but you might not know why. Try not to think about it too much, just take photographs of anything that you find interesting.

It doesn't matter how many photographs you take – if you fill up the whole film that would be great, but if you just take a few, then that is fine too.

I will arrange to collect the disposable cameras in order to have the film developed so we can talk about them in the interview.

I look forward to seeing what you love about your town!



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I, ..... of .....  
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The research program in which I am being asked to participate has been explained fully to me, verbally and in writing, and any matters on which I have sought information have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to have my interview(s) recorded by a digital audio recorder. I will have the choice to be referred to by name and position, or merely by my position in the thesis or any publication or presentation arising from the research;

I understand that:

- As the interview will be related to the strategic and policy aspects of my employment position, I will it is unlikely that my comments will remain entirely unidentifiable;
- aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals;
- *I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from it will not be used.*

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: .....

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## What will my participation involve?

Your involvement would require you to participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview that will take up about an hour of your time. In the interview you will be asked questions about the social, cultural, historical and economic dimensions of the small town in which you work. Questions will also focus on understanding the strategy and planning role of your organisation, in regard to social and economic sustainability with particular regard to youth and young people. These interviews will be used to provide context and background for a separate phase of research which will involve youth (15-19 year olds) and young people (20-29 year olds) from each of the case study towns.

## How will my privacy be protected?

As this phase of interviews will relate to your role in local government or a community organisation, it will be necessary to include a description of your role in the research outcomes. As such, it will not be possible to maintain anonymity. However, you will be given the choice to be referred to either by your name and position of employment, or just by your position of employment in the research outputs. Interview recording and transcripts remain in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer for five years before being securely destroyed. Only the PhD researcher and Supervisor will have access to this data.

## Will I have to do anything I don't want to?

All participation in the project is entirely voluntary and you do not have to answer any question in the interview if you do not wish to. You are entitled to withdraw your consent to participate and discontinue participation at any stage before the data is processed. If you decide not to participate, you do not need to provide any reasons why.

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## What will happen with this research?

This research is a PhD project, and the outcomes will be presented in a PhD Thesis, which will be available online and at the Federation University Australia library. Findings will also be presented at academic conferences, and in academic journals. Participants will be offered a briefing about the outcomes of the research, which will be provided in a group with other participants from your organisation.

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled *Local culture and regional sustainability: Mapping the cultural assets of young people in Victorian regional towns*, please contact the Principal Researcher, Professor Keir Reeves of the Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History (CRAH):

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EMAIL: [k.reeves@federation.edu.au](mailto:k.reeves@federation.edu.au)

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P O Box 663 Mt Helen Vic 3353 or Northways Rd, Churchill Vic 3842.

Telephone: (03) 5327 9765, (03) 5122 6446

Email: [research.ethics@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@federation.edu.au)

CRICOS Provider Number 00103D